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THE
SANITARY CONDITION
OF
THE LABORING POPULATION
OF
NEW YORK.

WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT.

A DISCOURSE
(WITH ADDITIONS)

DELIVERED ON THE 30TH DECEMBER, 1844, AT THE REPOSITORY OF THE
AMERICAN INSTITUTE.

BY

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EASTERN DISPENSARIES.

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P R E F A C E .

THE subject matter of the following pages was originally addressed, in the form of a letter, to the Chief Magistrate of the city. Its preparation was undertaken, principally with a view to an exposition of the true principles which should regulate the action of public bodies, in matters relating to the health of cities, in a knowledge of, or concern for, which, recent events had shown our own municipal legislature, to be somewhat deficient. Appreciating fully the importance of its facts and suggestions, the Mayor transmitted the communication to a co-ordinate branch of the City Government, recommending it to their serious attention. After several weeks' deliberation upon it, the committee to whom it was referred arrived at the conclusion, embodied in the following language quoted from their report: "Your committee do not profess to be judges of the subject, or in other words, they do not think it proper at this time, to go into such a measure," and they recommended that the paper be returned to its author. Under these circumstances no other course remained, in order to obtain for the subject its merited attention, than to lay the communication before the public, as was done in a free lecture.

The writer embraces this occasion to acknowledge his obligations to the several professional gentlemen, and Tract agents, who have so kindly aided him in preparing this exposé of the sanitary condition and wants of this city;—to Hon. James Harper, for his complimentary though unavailing recommendation of the paper to the Common Council, as well as to him and to Hugh Maxwell, Andrew Boardman, Gen. James Tallmadge, Wm. B. Crosby, Peter Cooper, Horatio Allen, T. G. Mower, M. D. U. S. A., James J. Mapes, Hon. Wm. T. McCoun, J. L. Mott, Wm. Shotwell, Josiah Rich, and Wager Hull, for the voluntary and liberal assistance rendered by them, in bringing it before the public, in its present form. Thanks are due also to the American Institute for the free use of their Repository, for the delivery of the discourse.

272 East Broadway, January, 1845.

CONTENTS.

	<i>Page</i>
Objects briefly stated,	2
Distinction between Public Health and Individual Health,	3
System of Tenantage of the Poor,	6
Arrangements of dwellings of the Poor,	7
Cellars as residences—their influences,	8
Ventilation—Amount of air necessary for each person,	10
Number of Sick Paupers—Greater proportion of Females,	13
Letter from John A. Swett, M. D.	15
do. do. Stephen Wood, M. D.	16
do. do. B. McCready, M. D.	18
Scrofula—the prevailing disease,	19
Respective influences of food and air,	20
Number dying at certain ages,	21
Comparative chances of life in different Occupations,	“
Government a party to the degradation of its subjects,	23
Influence of ill-health on morals,	24
Queries addressed to the Tract Missionaries,	25
Answer from Rev. G. Hatt,	“
“ “ J. B. Horton,	27
“ “ Samuel Russel, Jr.	30
“ “ John H. Bulen,	32
“ “ Rev. Isaac Orchard,	34
Dependence of the Community on the Labor of its Members,	39
Extract from Hon. Horace Mann,	“
Present External and Internal Health Police,	41
Late appointment of City Inspector, and memorial of Medical Profession,	43
Suggestion of a new Arrangement for, and Proper Duties of a Sanitary Police,	44
Fresh air a preventive of Intemperance,	49
Medical Education in an Officer of Health necessary,	50
Letter from R. K. Hoffman, M. D.	51
Sewerage—Burial Places, &c.—Study of causes of disease,	52
Study of Physiology recommended,	55

SANITARY CONDITION

OF THE

LABORING POPULATION OF NEW YORK.

" No duty can engage the attention of the magistracy of a city or state, more dignified in itself, more beneficial to the present generation, or more likely to prove useful to their descendants, than that of procuring and maintaining a sound state of the public health.

Of the three objects contemplated in the Declaration of Independence as necessary to be secured by government, the first named is "Life." Higher purposes cannot be conceived for which governments should be instituted.

As upon the condition of health of an individual are based his physical and mental strength, his ability for self-maintenance, his personal happiness, and that of others dependent on him, and also his usefulness to his family, to the community and his country ; and as the community depends for its prosperity upon the performances of its members, individually and collectively, in the measure of influence committed to them respectively, so does the health of the people affect the capacity and interests of the state.

As upon the individual, when sick, falls an increased pecuniary burden, with (in general) a suspension of income, so upon the state or city, must rest, not only the expenses of removing an unsound condition of public health, but also, from the attendant loss of character, a diminution of its resources.

When individuals of the pauper class are ill, their entire support, and perchance that of the whole family, falls upon the community. From a low state of general health, whether in an individual or in numbers, proceed diminished energy of body and of mind, and a vitiated moral perception, the frequent precursor of habits and deeds, which give employment to the officers of police, and the ministers of justice.

These, among other considerations, together with the recent expression by the chief magistrate of the city of his interest in the sanitary condition of his constituency, by the recommendation to the Common Council of a measure of no ordinary importance to their welfare

and comfort,* induce me to urge attention to a measure of improvement which has long impressed my mind, as one, above all others, demanding the action of the City Government.))

When it was my pleasure, as it was my duty, in 1842 and '43, to devote my small energies to the sanitary improvement of my native city, stimulated by the consciousness of being engaged in a work heretofore untried in any systematic form, and promising results of the highest and most enduring interests to my fellow citizens, I seized the occasion to recommend to the Common Council the adoption of a measure of Health Police, which I thought of serious necessity. It was the last effort I was enabled to make upon the subject, before I was again consigned to the private ranks, by removal from office. I then hoped to see the small beginning I had made, grow into shape and usefulness under the fostering hands of whoever might be my successors. But, in common with all who had the subject so much at heart, I have been disappointed; for not only was it untouched, but the seeds which I had planted were neglected, and suffered to rot in the ground. Another political revolution brought with it the hope, strengthened by loud professions of municipal reform, that at last the day was certain and at hand, when this subject would be no longer allowed to slumber, but would be regarded as one of the most urgent, and among the first, of the objects of attention by the new Common Council. The expectations of the public could not be mistaken; but an erroneous appreciation, or an entire misconception, in some quarter, of the duties and requisite qualifications of an officer of health, has deferred the hopes entertained of the further prosecution of this interesting, and vitally important, sanitary reform.

The desire which stimulated me in former days was, however, not suffered to sleep in my bosom; a year's reflection, and daily and more extended observation, have not only confirmed my confidence in the feasibility, but increased the conviction of the necessity, of the measure I had proposed, and they have enabled me to modify, enlarge, and illustrate the plan, while the determination displayed by the new chief magistrate to do *his* share of the reforms promised, has inspired me afresh with the hope that the present might be a favourable time for a renewed presentation of my favourite design.

It is a measure of **SANITARY REFORM**. It is designed to relieve the city of a part of the heavy burden of sickness and mortality, which now oppresses its population, more especially that portion least able to relieve themselves, and most requiring the interposition and protection of Law. It will be seen to be a measure of humanity, of justice to the poor, of safety to the whole people, and of economy to the public treasury.

The objects of this communication, briefly stated, are these;—1st, to show that there is an immense amount of sickness, physical disability, and premature mortality, among the poorer classes;—2d, that these are, to a large extent, unnecessary, being in a great degree the results

* Public Baths.

of causes which are removeable ;—3d, that these physical evils are productive of moral evils of great magnitude and number, and which, if considered only in a pecuniary point of view, should arouse the government and individuals to a consideration of the best means for their relief and prevention ; and 4th, to suggest the means of alleviating these evils and preventing their recurrence to so great an extent.

Before proceeding to the explanation of the subject, it is necessary to understand the distinction between *Public Health* and *Individual Health*. In some senses these are different, in others they are similar, and have an intimate connexion. The difference depends chiefly on the cause being *personal* or *general*. Thus an individual may be made sick by causes which affect no one else, as in Dyspepsia, Ophthalmia, Rheumatism, &c., and yet even these diseases, personal and peculiar as they seem to be, will sometimes be found dependent upon causes which affect large numbers at the same time. For instance, the well water, which we have heretofore been obliged to drink, was the frequent cause of Dyspepsia, and some other complaints. Ophthalmia sometimes prevails extensively in asylums and hospitals, and at the Long Island farms it has several times proved a scourge, while both it and Rheumatism are frequent among the residents of damp and dark cellars.

Consumption is an instance of a disease of individual character, but which is, to a very considerable extent, in its commencement and progress, influenced by the circumstances surrounding the patient. The same may be said of Scrofula especially, of which, indeed, many other diseases are only accompaniments or symptoms.

While there is scarcely a disease which may not at times become epidemic or endemic, there are some more strikingly and uniformly so ; ex. gr. : Fevers of various kinds, as Yellow, Typhus, Intermittent, and likewise Small Pox, Scarlatina, Cholera, Measles, &c.

Summer is the season generally deemed most prolific in diseases ; the cause usually assigned for this is the heat of the weather acting upon animal and vegetable matter, producing more extensive and rapid decomposition, the gases from which are generally imagined to be so destructive to health and life. It is true that certain diseases prevail mostly during the hot months—these are Yellow Fever, Cholera Infantum, and the like, while Typhoid and Bilious diseases are frequent in autumn, the latter also attributable to the same causes. The quantity of these offensive vegetable and animal materials is, therefore, among other things, supposed to be, in a considerable degree, the generator, and regulator of the intensity, of these diseases. But this is not by any means the whole of this subject. By a reference to some of the Annual Mortality Reports, it will be seen that sometimes as great a number of deaths occurs during the cold months as during the hot. These are mostly of those affections attributable to the influence of cold and of increased moisture, principally diseases of the Lungs. To a certain degree this view of causes is correct, but in both cases, a well-directed inquiry into the condition in which people live, the position and arrangement of their working and lodging rooms, the character of their food, their habits of dress and cleanliness, the well or ill ventilated

rooms they occupy by day and by night, would, in this city, as it has done in other places, develop an amount of ignorance and inattention to the laws of life which would astound the most credulous, and fully account for the great and premature mortality of our citizens.

At all seasons of the year, there is an amount of sickness and death in this, as in all large cities, far beyond those of less densely peopled, more airy and open places, such as country residences. Even in villages of small size, there is an observable difference over the isolated country dwelling, in the proportionate amount of disease prevailing; proving conclusively that the congregation of animal and vegetable matters, with their constant effluvia, which has less chance of escape from the premises, in proportion to the absence of free circulation of air, is detrimental to the health of the inhabitants.

These circumstances have never yet been investigated in this city, as they should be. Our people, especially the more destitute, have been allowed to live out their brief lives in tainted and unwholesome atmospheres, and be subject to the silent and invisible encroachments of destructive agencies from every direction, without one warning voice being raised to point to them their danger, and without an effort to rescue them from their impending fate. Fathers are taken from their children, husbands from their wives, "ere they have lived out half their days,"—the widows and orphans are thrown upon public or private charity for support, and the money which is expended to save them from starvation, to educate them in the public schools, or, perchance, to maintain them in the work-house or the prison, if judiciously spent in improving the sanitary arrangements of the city, and instilling into the population a knowledge of the means by which their health might be protected, and their lives prolonged and made happy, would have been not only saved, but returned to the treasury in the increased health of the population, a much better state of public morals, and, by consequence, a more easily governed and respectable community.

It is of course among the poorer labouring classes that such knowledge is most wanted. The rich, though they may be equally ignorant of the laws of life, and of the best means of its preservation, live in larger houses, with freer ventilation, and upon food better adapted to support health and life. Their means of obtaining greater comforts and more luxuries, are to them, though perhaps unconsciously, the very reason of their prolonged lives. Besides this, they are less harassed by the fears and uncertainty of obtaining for themselves and families a sufficiency of food and clothing. They are thus relieved of some of the most depressing influences, which tend to reduce the energy of mind and body in the poor, and render the latter more susceptible to the inroads of disease.

Sanitary regulations affect the pauper class of the population more directly than any other, because they live in situations and circumstances which expose them more to attacks of disease. They are more crowded, they live more in cellars, their apartments are less ventilated, and more

exposed to vapours and other emanations, &c., hence, ventilation, sewerage, and all other sanitary regulations, are more necessary for them, and would produce a greater comparative change in their condition. The influence of drainage upon the health and lives of the population, is too well known to require, at this day, any argument. Almost every one has heard of the effects of marshy soil, in country situations, producing Intermittent Fever, or Fever and Ague, and of the entire disappearance of the disease, simply by draining off the water, and permitting the ground to become dry. Its results in populous cities are equally well marked. The last instance which has come to my knowledge is one stated by Professor Buckland, that in St. Margaret, Leicesters, England, containing 22,000 inhabitants, it appeared that one portion of it was effectually drained, some parts but partially so, and others not at all. In the latter, the average duration of life is *thirteen years and a half*, while in the same parish, where the drainage is better, though only partial, the average is *twenty-two years and a half*, showing the frightful effects of a bad atmosphere. It were easy to quote several instances, some important ones, from London statistics, but it is unnecessary, as I presume the fact will not be disputed, that sewerage and its kindred measures, exert a striking influence over the condition and duration of human life.

The investigations to which I have briefly alluded, as so necessary and desirable for this city, have been carried on in other countries, with a degree of enthusiasm, sustained by talent and learning, which does honour to Philanthropy. No one can rise from the perusal of the works of Edwin Chadwick of London, or of Parent Du Chatelet of Paris, or of many others who have laboured in this field of humanity, without feeling a portion of the ardor which inspires them, and wishing he had been thrown into the same pursuit, that some of the leaves of the same laurel might encircle his own brow. It is the cause of Humanity, of the poor, the destitute, the degraded, of the virtuous made vicious by the force of circumstances, which they are now investigating, and exposing to the knowledge of others.

It is often said that "one half the world does not know how the other half lives." The labor of raising the veil which now separates the two halves, by which the misery and degradation of the one, have been concealed from the view of the other, has been theirs and their associates. Howard, called by distinction *the Philanthropist*, revealed to the gaze of the astonished multitude the interior of the prisons of England, and straightway the process of reform commenced in them, and continued until the prison system of the present day, has become one of the most striking examples of the spirit of the times. But Chadwick and Du Chatelet, especially the former, are diving still deeper into the subject of moral and physical reform. They are probing to the bottom the foul ulcers upon the body of society, and endeavouring to discover the causes of so much wretchedness and vice, which fill the prisons and work-houses. Howard's labours tended to *cure* the disease, Chadwick's to *prevent* it. These operations constitute a highly important part of the great work of melioration and improvement, in the con-

dition of mankind, now going on, in nearly all civilized countries, and which characterize the present age.

If not on a par, in importance, with the improvement in education, which has of late made such rapid strides, it certainly is second only to it, and indeed it may well be questioned, whether improvement in the physical condition of the lower stratum of society, is not a necessary precedent, in order that education of the mind may exercise its full and proper influence over the general well-being. Teach them how to live, so as to avoid diseases and be more comfortable, and then their school education will have a redoubled effect, in mending their morals, and rendering them intelligent and happy. But without sound bodies, when surrounded with dirt, foul air, and all manner of filthy associations, it is vain to expect even the child of education, to be better than his ignorant companions, if indeed you do not, by educating him, give him an additional weapon, by which he may prey more successfully upon his fellows.

This country, and especially this city, it is hoped, will not much longer be behind others in this cause of the suffering poor and depressed humanity. Some movements, promoting this investigation, have recently been commenced, but much is yet to be done. The path has been pointed out to us by pioneers across the Atlantic; there is abundant disposition to pursue the object, which only requires to be sought out, and put to work by the authorities, to procure all the desirable results of such labours.

The system of tenantry to which large numbers of the poor are subject, I think, must be regarded as one of the principal causes, of the helpless and noisome manner in which they live. The basis of these evils is the subjection of the tenantry, to the merciless inflictions and extortions of the *sub-landlord*. A house, or a row, or court of houses, is hired by some person of the owner, on a lease of several years, for a sum which will yield a fair interest on the cost. The *owner* is thus relieved of the great trouble incident to the changes of tenants, and the collection of rents. His income is sure from one individual, and obtained without annoyance or oppression on his part. It then becomes the object of the lessee, to make and save as much as possible, with his adventure, sufficient sometimes to enable him to purchase the property in a short time.

The tenements, in order to admit a greater number of families, are divided into small apartments, as numerous as decency will admit. Regard to comfort, convenience, and health, is the last motive; indeed, the great ignorance of this class of speculators (who are very frequently foreigners and keep a grog shop on the premises) would prevent a proper observance of these, had they the desire. These closets, for they deserve no other name, are then rented to the poor, from week to week, or month to month, the rent being almost invariably required in advance, at least for the first few terms. The families moving in first, after the house is built, find it clean, but the lessee has no supervision over their habits, and however filthy the tenement may become, he cares not, so that he receives his rent. He and his family are often found steeped as low in depravity and discomforts, as any of his tenants, being above

them only in the possession of money, and doubtless often beneath them in moral worth and sensibility.

It is very frequently the case that families, after occupying rooms a few weeks, will change their location, leaving behind them all the dirt which their residence has occasioned. Upon this the next comers will sit down, being so much occupied with the hurry of moving, and with the necessity of placing their furniture immediately in order, that attention to cleansing the apartment is out of the question, until they are "settled," and then, if done at all, it is in the most careless and inefficient manner. Very often, perhaps in a majority of the cases in the class of which I now speak, no cleaning other than washing the floor, is ever attempted, and that but seldom. Whitewashing, cleaning of furniture, of bedding, or persons, in many cases is *never* attempted. Some have old pieces of carpet, which are never shaken, (they would not bear it,) and are used to hide the filth on the floor. Every corner of the room, of the cupboards, of the entries and stairways, is piled up with dirt. The walls and ceilings, with the plaster broken off in many places, exposing the lath and beams, and leaving openings for the escape from within of the effluvia of vermin, dead and alive, are smeared with the blood of unmentionable insects, and dirt of all indescribable colours. The low rooms are diminished in their areas by the necessary encroachments of the roof, or the stairs leading to the rooms above; and behind and under them is a hole, into which the light of day never enters, and where a small bed is often pushed in, upon which the luckless and degraded tenants pass their nights, weary and comfortless.

In these places, the filth is allowed to accumulate to an extent almost incredible. Hiring their rooms for short periods only, it is very common to find the poor tenants moving from place to place, every few weeks. By this practice they avoid the trouble of cleansing their rooms, as they can leave behind them the dirt which they have made. The same room, being occupied in rapid succession, by tenant after tenant, it will easily be seen how the walls and windows will become broken, the doors and floors become injured, the chimneys filled with soot, the whole premises populated thickly with vermin, the stairways, the common passage of several families, the receptacle for all things noxious, and whatever of self-respect the family might have had, be crushed under the pressure of the degrading circumstances by which they are surrounded.

Another very important particular in the arrangements of these tenements must here be noticed. By the mode in which the rooms are planned, *ventilation is entirely prevented*. It would seem as if most of these places were built expressly for this purpose. They have one or two windows, and a door at one side of the room, but no opening anywhere else. A draught of air *through*, is therefore an utter impossibility. The confined position of the dwelling itself, generally, prevents the access of the external currents of air, even to the outside, to any considerable extent. The window sashes, in addition, perhaps are so arranged, that the upper one (if there are two) cannot be let down, being permanently fastened up; hence the external air, poor as it is, cannot visit the upper section of the room, unless by opening the door, by which

the interior of the room is exposed to view. If there is a sleeping apartment, it is placed at the extremity of the room farthest from the windows, is generally but little larger than sufficient to hold a bedstead, and its area is reduced, for air, by the bed furniture, trunks, boxes, &c. and having no windows, fresh air and sun light are entire strangers to its walls. In this dark hole there is, of course, a concentrated accumulation of the effluviæ of the bodies and breaths of the persons sleeping in it, (frequently the whole family, several in number,) and this accumulation goes on from night to night, without relief, until it can easily be believed the smell becomes intolerable, and its atmosphere productive of the most offensive and malignant diseases. There is no exaggeration in this description. I cannot too highly colour the picture, if I would. What, then, will be thought of the condition of thousands of our fellow-citizens in the *winter season*, when every crevice is closed to keep out the cold air, and when I state, that what I have described, I have repeatedly seen and felt in the *summer*, when the windows and doors are opened to the fullest extent, day and night, admitting all the ventilation possible, small as it is.

I have had recent occasion to visit several of these pestiferous places, and I pen these paragraphs in the month of August, with their sight and smell fresh upon my senses.

The almost entire absence of household conveniences, contributes much to the prostration of comfort and self-respect of these wretched people. The deficiency of water, and the want of a convenient place for washing, with no other place for drying clothes than the common sitting and bed room, are very serious impediments in the way of their improvement. Without any convenient or safe place to deposit wood, or coal, or food in large quantities, all their purchases are by "the small," from the neighbouring grocer, (who is perhaps the landlord,) at prices from 10 to 50 per cent. above the rates at which they might be obtained, under better circumstances.

But the most offensive of all places for residence are the *cellars*. It is almost impossible, when contemplating the circumstances and condition of the poor beings who inhabit these holes, to maintain the proper degree of calmness requisite for a thorough inspection, and the exercise of a sound judgment, respecting them. You must descend to them; you must feel the blast of foul air as it meets your face on opening the door; you must grope in the dark, or hesitate until your eye becomes accustomed to the gloomy place, to enable you to find your way through the entry, over a broken floor, the boards of which are protected from your tread by a half inch of hard dirt; you must inhale the suffocating vapor of the sitting and sleeping rooms; and in the dark, damp recess, endeavor to find the inmates by the sound of their voices, or chance to see their figures moving between you and the flickering blaze of a shaving burning on the hearth, or the misty light of a window coated with dirt and festooned with cobwebs—or if in search of an invalid, take care that you do not fall full length upon the bed with her, by stumbling against the bundle of rags and straw, dignified by that name, lying on the floor, under the window, if window there is;—all this, and much

more, beyond the reach of my pen, must be felt and seen, ere you can appreciate in its full force the mournful and disgusting condition, in which many thousands of the subjects of our government pass their lives.

“There vapors, with malignant breath
Rise thick, and scatter midnight death.”

There are two features of a cellar residence which more especially render them objectionable ; 1st, the dampness, and 2d, the more incomplete ventilation. In *any* cellar the impossibility of access for the heat of the sun to the parts of the soil adjacent to the floor and walls, and the absence of currents of air through the room, keep it much more damp than rooms above ground, where the heat and air have freer access. This is emphatically the case with *inhabited* cellars, inasmuch as the inmates are careful to exclude the external air, by closing all the avenues of its approach, in order to preserve the temperature high in winter and low in summer. The moisture, whose escape is thus prevented, is in itself a very prolific source of disease, and combined with the darkness and impure air of these places, is actually productive of a great amount of sickness. Could the sun and air be made to reach them, and were it possible to establish a sufficient ventilation through them, much of their noxiousness would be relieved ; but under no circumstances can they be made fit for the residence of *living* beings ; they are properly adapted only as receptacles for the dead.

In addition to these impediments to the drying of these places, they are very often so situated, that the surface water finds its way into them at every rain storm. It may be remembered that in the summer of 1843 all the underground apartments in many sections of the city were completely flooded by a deluge of rain. In the eastern part of the city, in Delancy, Rivington, Stanton, and many other of the neighbouring streets, almost every cellar (and great numbers of them are inhabited) were half filled with water. This evil will not recur to so great an extent, in the neighborhood alluded to, sewers having been built in some of the streets. But in other sections, indeed in every section, where the position of the basement is unaltered, and sewers are not constructed, the nuisance must be suffered at every rain storm. In some courts to which I can point, *the surface is below the level of the street*, and at every rain, the water being unable to run off into the street, is all discharged down into the adjacent areas and cellars, keeping them almost constantly wet. It was but a short time ago I met with the case of a woman, the wife of a tailor living in a noted court in Walker-street, and occupying partly a basement, in which she was compelled to pass much of her time. She has lived there six months, four of which she has been sick with rheumatism, and on that account, unable to work. Otherwise she would be able to earn considerable by assisting her husband. They have four children depending upon them, and are obliged to seek assistance from the public, in consequence of this sickness. She attributes her disease to the water in the cellar, which runs in, and obliges her to bale out, and wipe up, at every storm. The money expended upon them in charity, would have rectified all this

difficulty, have preserved the health and strength of the family, and saved all parties much trouble and suffering.

Another case is that of a woman with two children—her husband a labourer—living in a cellar in Lewis-street, two months. Before moving to this place, she lived in an upper room in Spring-street, and was there always well, *but has been sick ever since she went to live in the cellar.*

Another applied for medical aid who lives in a cellar, *immediately adjoining which, is the vault of a church-yard, the moisture from which comes through into the apartment, to such an extent, as obliged them to move the bed away from the wall.*

It is not a difficult matter for the Dispensary Physician, while receiving applications for medical aid at the office, to distinguish, in a majority of cases, the cellar residents from all others, without asking a question. If the whitened and cadaverous countenance should be an insufficient guide, *the odor of the person* will remove all doubt; a musty smell, which a damp cellar only can impart, pervades every article of dress, the woollens more particularly, as well as the hair and skin.

At No. 50 Pike-street is a cellar about ten feet square, and seven feet high, having only one very small window, and the old fashioned, inclined cellar door. In this small place, were lately residing *two families consisting of ten persons*, of all ages.

Dr. Reid, the ventilator of the new houses of parliament, places the quantity of air necessary for the perfect, free, and wholesome respiration of each adult person at ten cubic feet per minute.* Others before him have estimated it as low as two cubic feet. I coincide with Dr. Reid in his statement of the amount necessary for the attainment and preservation of *perfect health*; but the latter estimate is entirely too low. If we take the average of these two extremes, (six feet,) we shall find that the ten persons in the cellar of 50 Pike-street would render its 700 feet of air, unfit for the support of health, *in less than fifteen minutes.* Now, suppose them to retire and close the door and window at ten o'clock at night, what must be the condition of the air of the room, when they rise at five the next morning?

Is it astonishing that the Dispensary is called upon, very frequently, to extend its aid to these inmates? and should there not be some remedy for this dreadful state of things? The whole of these premises, besides the cellar, is in a condition unfit for human habitation, and yet crowded to a melancholy degree. A sanitary law that would reach this case, and

* "If we look to the fact that less than half a cubic foot of air passes through the lungs of an adult in a minute, this estimate may at first appear excessive, but if we remember, that at each expiration, a quantity of air is emitted, which mingles with an additional portion of air largely exceeding its own bulk, and that there are twenty such expirations in a minute, while provision is likewise required for the air that affects the surface of the body, and for the endless variety of minor effects produced by furniture, lighting, heating, refreshments, &c.; where no peculiar adaptation for these purposes have been introduced beyond those usually observed, it will be seen that the estimate is by no means immoderate. *The real question is not, what the constitution can bear, but that amount which is conveniently accessible in ordinary habitations, and which is essential for the wants of the system.*"—ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF VENTILATION, BY DAVID BOSWELL REID, M. D.

be well applied, would save a large amount of life, health, money, and morals. The same may be said of hundreds of other places, of which this is a fair average sample. There are many places still worse.

An inquiry into the amount of air allowed to children in schools, to the inmates of prisons, and to laborers in work-shops, will exhibit a degree of neglect, or ignorance, in relation to this vitally important subject, in individuals having the training and guardianship of these classes, truly lamentable, as well as surprising. For examples.

One of the Public Infant Schools of this city, having an average attendance the year round, of 200 children, was for a long time, and until recently, kept in the basement of a church, the dimensions of which were $46 \times 30 \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ feet, equal to 11730 cubic feet. The proximity of the adjoining buildings rendered it so dark in a sunny day, it was difficult to see to write on a slate a short distance from the windows. A large stove warmed the room in winter. These children had about sixty cubic feet each, for the six school hours, equal to ten cubic feet per hour, when each child should have ten cubic feet per minute. *Ventilation was unthought of*, until recently, and now in consequence of the position and arrangement of the building, it is very imperfect.

The dormitories of the House of Refuge have each an area of less than 200 cubic feet. When the door is closed on the inmate, his bed, which is about eighteen inches from the floor, is extended nearly across the cell, diminishing by so much its atmospheric area, and intercepting almost wholly the communication between a very small opening at the bottom, and another at the top, and one in the middle, of the door. Those openings were intended, but are wholly inadequate, for ventilation, even if no bed were there. For the perfect decarbonization of the blood, the air in each dormitory, at the lowest proper estimate, will remain sufficiently pure for the space of thirty minutes only, yet the youthful inmates are locked in from 8 P. M. till 5 A. M. *nine hours, with no other ventilation than what I have described.* Their work-shops cannot be said to be much better supplied with air. The effects of this privation are plainly marked upon the countenances, and general physical development, of the children.

The general arrangement of the cells in the City Prison is but little if any better. Besides the small window near the ceiling on one side, air is admitted only through *five auger holes in the door* on the opposite side, and these latter are of no service at night, when the inner door is closed.

We now naturally come, in the course of this inquiry, to two important questions, preparatory to the suggestion I intend to make, of a remedy for these evils.

- 1st. What is the effect of this degraded and filthy manner of life upon the health of the individuals, and the duration of their lives?
- 2d. What is its influence upon their morals, their self-respect, and appreciation of virtue?

The answers to these queries must have an important bearing upon the moral obligations, the pecuniary expenses, and the order and character of the City Government. If it can be shown that much sickness and

many premature deaths are results of these residences, it will be evident that the care of the sick, and the support of the widows and orphans, must add greatly to the expenses of the city; and if it can be proved that degraded habits, bad associations, and immoral practises (though the results only of circumstances, and not of education) are their consequences, it will be equally apparent, there will thus be continued, a class in the community more difficult to govern, more disposed to robbery, mobs, and other lawless acts, and less accessible to the influences of religious and moral instruction.

With regard to the first question, an argument can hardly be necessary. Almost every one can recall to mind, some proof of the effects of nauseous odors, of the inhalation of foul air, or of sleeping in a small confined apartment, upon his own health and feelings. These effects may have been only temporary, but they will serve to show that a prolonged continuance of them, must, in reason, produce permanently bad results upon the mental and corporeal powers. If the inhaled air (one great source of the life, health, and vigor of the animal structure) is deteriorated in quality, or diminished in quantity, below the standards necessary for a perfect decarbonization of the blood in the lungs, the blood necessarily becomes burdened with impurities, and fails to impart to the system the qualities demanded by nature for the due maintenance of health and strength. Every city resident who takes a stroll into the country, can testify to the difference between the atmospheres of the two situations:—the contrast of our out-door (to say nothing of the in-door) atmosphere, loaded with the animal and vegetable exhalations of our streets, yards, sinks, and cellars—and the air of the mountains, rivers, and grassy plains, needs no epicurean lungs to detect it. The superior corporeal activity, and the mental exhilaration imparted by it, are the *prima facie* proofs of its superiority. Compare the pale face of the city belle, or matron, after the long confinement of the winter and spring, with the same countenance in the fall, upon her return from a few weeks tour to the Springs and Niagara, and observe whether the return of the long absent rose upon the cheek, is not accompanied with a greater elasticity of frame, and a happier and stronger tone of mind.

Descend a few steps further, from the airy and well-lighted chamber and parlor, to the confined apartments of the pent-up court, and the damp, secluded cellar; draw a contrast between the gay inhabitant of the former, and the attenuated tenant of the latter, and we may then judge of the influences of the air, which they respectively respire.

Observe, further, the vast difference in the development of frame, healthiness of countenance, and power of endurance, between the children of the farmer, and the offspring of the city resident.

A highly respected friend, a distinguished advocate, informed me, lately, that some of his children had not had a day's illness during the two years they had been at school in the country, while the others, residing at home, though in a comparatively salubrious position in the city, cost him from twenty to thirty dollars each, per annum, for medicine and medical attendance.

The following facts show, by figures, the sad condition in which a very large number of our people may be said, barely to exist.

As a great part of the population of these places are destitute of the means of paying for medical assistance, the duty of ministering to them in hours of sickness, falls upon the Dispensary Physicians. I find, upon examining the records of their labors, the reports of the three medical charities, for the year ending March, 1844, there were prescribed for at the offices, and the homes of the poor, at the

Northern Dispensary,	13,317	Patients,
Eastern	17,107	"
New York	23,853	"

Total, 54,282

From this number a deduction is to be made of those vaccinated, being 4505. In visiting the sick poor at their homes, however, it happens very frequently that some are prescribed for, whose names are neglected to be entered, so that it is perfectly safe to estimate the number of sick persons who received aid from these charities, to be *over* 50,000 *in one year*. In the corresponding year there were admitted into the Alms House Hospital 2332 patients, and into the City Hospital, about 1000, exclusive of seamen, making a total of over 53,000, without enumerating the sick poor attended by private charity.

This is truly an appalling statement. Those unacquainted with the number and character of the poor, would scarcely believe so great a number actually existed in this city, destitute of means, and there might arise an inclination to suspect an exaggeration of the statements, were not the names and residences entered at length on the registers.

Does it not become the duty of the magistrate and the philanthropist upon the presentation of such a statement as this, of the waste and havoc of the life, health, and strength of the people, to institute an inquiry into the causes of so great an amount of sickness, and to use every possible means to alleviate them?

Another fact developed by these reports is conclusive as to the influence of the causes to which I have alluded, of this great amount of sickness.

If the habitation of damp, dark cellars, and of narrow alleys and courts, and the breathing of a vitiated atmosphere, are *rightly* asserted to be promotive of disease, then those most subject to these causes should be sick in the greatest numbers. Now the *male* part of this class breathe a totally different air through the day, at their labors in the streets, along the rivers, or upon buildings, and *only at night* are they subject to the worse atmosphere. Thus more than half their hours are passed under more healthful circumstances. Even the boys who spend several hours at play, or even in a partially ventilated school-house, follow an improved regimen in this particular. On the other hand, *the females, both night and day*, inhale the polluted atmosphere of the dwellings, and are more continually under all the other bad influences of their unfortunate situations.

Do the official results correspond with these premises?

It will be seen upon examining the Dispensary returns, that in some years the proportion of females to males, prescribed for at the Dispensaries, has been as 12 to 10½—in others, 12 to 8½, and in one instance as 19 to 11. This comparison is rendered more striking when we take into account the greater amount of intemperance among the males.

The Annual Reports of the City Inspector show that nearly one-half the deaths by consumption are of the *foreign part of the population*, and that more than *one-third* the whole number of deaths are of foreigners. Such an immense disproportion can only be accounted for on the supposition that some extraordinary causes of death prevail among the strangers who come to reside among us. Now it is a pretty well ascertained fact, that a large majority of the cellar and court population of this city consists of persons of foreign birth and their children. Of the Dispensary patients, about 60 *per cent.* are natives of other countries, and if it were possible to ascertain the parentage of the children receiving aid from these institutions, we should find a larger proportion than this directly dependent upon foreigners. There is no doubt that 75 per cent. of them are either immigrants, or the children of such. Put these facts, then, side by side, and we are confirmed in the conclusion that the domiciliary condition of these poor beings, the confined spaces in which they dwell, the unwholesome air they breathe, and their filth and degradation, are prolific sources of an immense amount of distress and sickness, which in their turn, serve, by the loss of time, of wages, and of strength, to aggravate the miserableness of their condition, to increase the danger to the public health, and the burden of public and private charity.

17 The evils thus resulting are occasionally exhibited in an endemic form, i. e., some disease of a marked character will break out and attack a considerable number of persons in the same neighborhood, the extent of its prevalence depending upon the extent of the cause, or the facilities for its propagation. Thus a fever may commence in a certain place inhabited mostly by the destitute and filthy:—if the adjoining tenements are occupied by the same class of persons, and kept in the same dirty and ill-ventilated condition, the tenants of the latter will be very liable to attacks of the same disorder. The disease will often be observed to pass by houses in a better condition, and re-appear at a distance, where similar causes prevail.

Frequently, too, the prevailing disorder, though perhaps covering a large district, will be seen only in certain parts of houses, as the cellars. Several instances of this have occurred in New York, one of which was the memorable Banker (now Madison) Street fever of 1820. 562 blacks inhabited the infected district, of whom 119 lived in cellars; of these 119, 54 were sick of the prevailing fever, and 24 died. Of the remaining 443, who lived above ground, 101 were sick, and 46 died. Out of 48 blacks in 10 cellars, 33 were sick, of whom 14 died, while out of 120 whites, living immediately over their heads, in the same houses, not one even had the fever. Numerous other instances have occurred, which have attracted less attention, probably because of their

frequency rendering them less notorious. But there is, as is well known to the physicians who move among these haunts of wretchedness, a silent agency continually at work, destroying annually the health and lives of hundreds of our fellow-citizens, and entirely within the power of the city government to control or subdue, but which, by a strange neglect, appears to have been hitherto allowed to work out destruction unopposed.

I am enabled, by the kindness of some of my medical friends, to present a history of some of the endemic diseases which prevail in the precincts to which I have alluded. The following communications contain the testimony of gentlemen thoroughly acquainted with the character of these places, and the condition of their inmates, and whose opinions are entitled to the most weighty consideration.

I will only add to their views, that disorders arising and fostered in these low places, will sometimes become so virulent as to extend among and jeopard the lives of better classes of citizens; while on the occurrence of general epidemics, these localities constitute minor streams, whose poisonous waters, as they mingle with the great river of disease, give additional impetus to its destructive current.

From John A Swett, M. D. one of the Attending Physicians of the City Hospital.

New York, August 12th, 1844.

DEAR DOCTOR.—The epidemic continued fever, about which we had some conversation a few days ago, occurred during the summer and autumn of 1837, at the time I was physician to the N. Y. Dispensary, and had charge of a district, embracing a part of the 6th, 10th, and 14th wards, being bounded on the north and south by Walker and Chatham-streets, and extending east and west, from Allen to Mott-streets. The first cases occurred, I think, in July, and the disease continued to prevail in the latter part of September, at which time I ceased to observe it, being myself attacked with the same disease, which confined me until the cold weather in December, at which time the disease had disappeared in the district.

The epidemic interesting me very much, the cases were carefully observed, and in many instances full notes were taken of their history. The number of cases which fell under my observation was probably about thirty—it is very possible it exceeded this. They resembled each other very much in their history, and the more so, probably, from the fact that they were subjected to a very simple and uniform treatment. The organs principally affected were the brain, and those of the abdomen. Delirium and stupor, with tympanitis, and abdominal tenderness, were very commonly noticed, and often in a very marked degree, although vomiting and diarrhœa were seldom urgent, and always easily controlled. The tongue always became dry as the disease advanced, and typhoid symptoms, although not in an aggravated form, usually appeared before the termination. I remember the frequent occurrence of rose colored spots over the abdomen, and that in some instances, they were so large and numerous as to constitute one of the most marked symptoms, resembling rather the eruption of roseola, than the trifling

eruption we frequently notice in fever. Nearly all the cases recovered. I do not remember more than one or two that terminated fatally, and in these no post mortem examination was allowed. The treatment pursued was very simple, and consisted chiefly in attention to cleanliness, and to ventilation; the patients being allowed the free use of simple beverage, with the occasional administration of mild purgatives in some instances, and small doses of morphine in others; indeed fresh air, as far as it could be had, and cold water, were the principal agents to which I trusted for the restoration of my patients, and I had seldom reason to regret my reliance on this simple means. The benefit of this mode of treating these cases appeared to me particularly marked during the convalescence, which was surprisingly rapid, and almost invariably commenced on or near the fourteenth day after the attack.

The poor population of this district was principally Irish and German, whose habits, as you know, are more or less filthy, and who lived crowded together, with a family in every room in the house, and sometimes more. I did not observe, however, that the disease was decidedly more prevalent in those parts of the district which were most filthy and crowded, at least so far as individual houses were concerned, although if the district be divided into two equal parts by the Bowery, it is a remarkable fact that *all the cases*, I think without an exception, occurred to the west of this great thoroughfare, and it is quite certain, also, that the poor population is more crowded in this western division where the fever prevailed, than in the eastern where it did not exist at all.

The most striking circumstance that I noticed in this fever was, that in every instance (save one which I regard as a doubtful case) the disease existed *either in basements, or the first floor of houses that had neither basements nor cellars under them*. This circumstance early attracted my attention, and constant inquiry never enabled me to find any cases in the upper stories of those houses in which the disease was prevailing in the basement rooms, and yet these upper rooms were as full of people and as filthy as those below, and a more or less frequent communication existed between them. As a matter of course these basements were less exposed to ventilation than the rooms above, but this was not always the case. I remember, in particular, one old wooden house at the corner of two streets, without cellar or basement, in which the disease prevailed on the ground floor where the ventilation was excellent, and where filthy habits were certainly not observed. Indeed, it has always been my opinion that the cause of this fever was an emanation from the ground on which the dwellings in which it occurred were standing, and the principal reasons for this opinion I have already stated, viz. the abrupt and complete limitation of the disease in one direction at least, by the Bowery, and its occurrence only in the lowest rooms.

I remain truly yours,

JOHN A. SWETT.

From Stephen Wood, M. D. Physician to the Eastern Dispensary.

211 Madison-street, 8th Mo. 17th, 1844.

DEAR DOCTOR.—Agreeably to thy request, I have drawn up the fol-

lowing sketch of some cases, (which have occurred in my practice as one of the physicians of the E. Dispensary,) illustrating in some measure, the influence of locality and mode of life on health and diseases, which thou art at liberty to use in such manner as thou may think proper.

Some time during the Autumn of last year I attended at No. 249 Stanton-street, Charles Peterson, aged about forty-five years, of intemperate habits. He had Pneumonia, followed by Typhus symptoms, and lived but two or three days after my first visiting him. He had been sick for several days previously, and without medical attendance. At No. 96 Sheriff-street, and in the immediate neighborhood of this case, and at nearly the same time, I had another of like character, of about the same age, and of similar habits. This case likewise terminated fatally in the course of a few days.

In one of these cases the pulse was full and strong, so that I thought it best to bleed. The bleeding was followed by blisters, &c. ; but it soon became necessary to resort to stimulants, and other supporting measures. In the other case bleeding was not practised ; but a blister was applied to the chest, expectorants, stimulants, &c., administered, although with but temporary relief.

Both of these men, with their families, were wretchedly poor, living in cellar rooms, some six feet below the street, dark and damp, with very scanty ventilation, and ceilings, or rather beams so low, that I could not stand erect between them. The apartments at my first visit were filthy and offensive in the extreme ; yet some improvement became evident afterwards, as I generally in this class of patients, find it necessary in the first place, to lecture them on the importance of cleanliness, ventilation, temperance, &c.

I attribute the result of these cases, mainly to the situation, manner of living, and habits of the subjects. This at least was the conclusion I recollect I came to at the time ; my attention having being arrested at the fatality of cases which at first appeared likely to have a successful issue, as I had often had others of a like nature, terminate well under more favorable circumstances.

The widow of the patient, at 96 Sheriff-street, died last spring, with fever of a low form in the same miserable house. *Subsequently at this house a quantity of water was found under the flooring.* Lodgers were taken in there, and on one occasion, I found the owner, a colored woman, intoxicated.

Since her death, between one and two months ago, I attended a man of similar habits with the two cases above described, in an upper room of the same house with the two last, small, dirty, and badly ventilated. This also was a case of Pneumonia Typhoides, and ended in death.

I have had other cases in these premises at different times, and some of them have been attended, (indeed I may say *most*,) with symptoms indicating a low state of the vital forces, and they have been generally slow in convalescing.

All these cases occurred in colored persons. The building in which they were is only occupied by persons of this class ; and most of them

appear to be intemperate, and of the very lowest grade—"the offscouring of all things."

On the premises, and in the vicinity, are a number of vile grog-shops, at which these poor creatures obtain the means of their physical sufferings, and intellectual, moral, and religious degradation, and too often, it is to be feared, their final and lasting ruin.

I rejoice however in stating, that within a few months a visible improvement has taken place in these abodes of misery, and in some of their occupants. This has been effected mainly by the Health Warden and Street Inspector of the ward (eleventh.) One of the grogeries through their interference has been shut up, some of the worst of the rooms closed, and the inmates sent to Blackwell's Island.

In the course of my practice, I have had many forms of disease apparently caused and kept up by residence in low, dark, damp, and insufficiently ventilated apartments. Yet I would not exclude the influence of other sources of the "ills which flesh is heir to," particularly of deficient or improper nourishment and bad nursing; and frequently no nursing at all, especially among Dispensary patients.

The condition of the dwellings of many of the poor of our city, is a subject much needing the careful attention of the philanthropist, if not of our municipal authorities, who, it appears to me, ought to have a more watchful supervision of the tenements of this portion of our population.

Respectfully thy Friend,
STEPHEN WOOD.

From B. IV. McCready, M. D. late Physician to the City Dispensary, and City Prison.

Wednesday, September 3d, 1844.

MY DEAR SIR—If I apprehend aright the purport of your queries, you wish to know of me whether I have met with any cases of infectious diseases occurring among the poor, which might have been prevented by proper sanitary regulations. In the summer of '42, a number of cases of Typhus fever, of a very severe type, occurred in a building in the rear of No. 49 Elizabeth street, under circumstances which left no doubt as to its local origin. The front building, a small two story frame house, was partly occupied by the proprietor, or lessee, of the building, as a liquor store, and partly sub-let to several Irish families. A covered alley-way led to the rear building. This was a double frame house, three stories in height. It stood in the centre of the yard. Ranged next the fence, where a number of pig styes and stables, which surrounded the yard on three sides. From the quantity of filth, liquid and otherwise, thus caused, the ground, I suppose, had been rendered almost impassable, and to remedy this, the yard had been completely boarded over, so that the earth could nowhere be seen. These boards were partially decayed, and by a little pressure, even in dry weather, a thick greenish fluid could be forced up through their crevices. The central building was inhabited wholly by negroes. In this building there occurred, in the course of six weeks, nine cases of Typhus fever. The two first taken, resided on the ground floor, and both died. The

others residing on the second and third floors, finally recovered. Two other cases at least, occurred among those who were temporarily in the house as nurses, or visitors, but as they were all at their own houses, these patients did not come under my own observation. The disease would undoubtedly have spread farther, but the inhabitants took the alarm, and the house for a time was deserted. At my solicitation the Alderman of the ward visited the building, the number of pigs about the establishment was reduced to that allowed by law, and chloride of lime, white-washing, &c., liberally, and assiduously employed.

I had three cases of Typhus in a back cellar, in the rear, I think, of 16 Marion Street, though it may have been 12 or 14. The cellar was ten or twelve feet under ground, the first floor of the house being a little elevated above the level of the yard, and dimly lighted (not ventilated) by one small window. It either had no communication whatever with the front cellar, or the communication was completely blocked up. A child was in the first place seized by the disease, then its mother, then a lodger who lived with them. They all recovered, but how, it would be hard to tell. No one appeared to come near them, save the visitor from the almshouse, and myself.

That Typhus fever, generated in the first place under particular circumstances, may become highly contagious, is now, I believe, the general opinion of the best informed of the profession. A very striking illustration of this occurred in my practice. A young Irish woman who had come to this country with her husband and child, was taken with Typhus at the house of her father, just after she had been landed from an emigrant ship. The family, at that time, resided in Madison Street. She had a very severe attack, and came near dying. Next, her father, who had been many years in this country, was seized. Then the child. The family now removed from Madison Street to Elizabeth Street. The greatest care was taken to preserve proper ventilation, cleanliness, &c. In despite of this, the disease successively attacked two younger brothers, the mother, two grown sisters, and an elder brother. I was in attendance in the family from Christmas, at which time I found the young woman who was first attacked, almost in articulo mortis, till May, when the disease, after having successively visited every member of the family, finally disappeared.

Yours, sincerely,

B. W. McCREADY.

Among the diseases most frequently resulting from an imperfection in the means of life, is *scrofula*, in its Protean forms. Dr. Watson, of London, the latest authority in the Practice of Medicine, in speaking of the general causes of this disease, enumerates as the most prominent, "Insufficient nutriment, exposure to wet and cold, impurity of atmosphere, want of natural exercise, and mental disquietude. To estimate the separate effect of each of these causes, may be difficult, but their combined influence is unquestionable." After a considerable experience in Dispensary and Hospital practice, I hesitate not to declare, and believe I shall be supported in the opinion by my colleagues in

the institutions with which I have been and am now connected, that *this disease is the great scourge of the pauper population*. It exhibits itself in the skin, in the eyes, the viscera of the abdomen and of the chest, in the muscles, and in the bones ; in fact, every organ of the body, which is dependent for its healthy condition upon a sound state of the blood, (and there is no exception,) may and does give evidence, differing in each case, of the influence of this degeneration, and the great prevalence of its producing causes.

The question will very naturally arise in the reader's mind, whether much of the ills to which the poor are heir, is not produced by the necessarily restricted quantity, and impure quality, of their food. . To this I reply, that food in the varied imperfections of quality and amount, unquestionably constitutes one of the most frequent and powerful of the causes of human diseases generally. It is under some of the circumstances of animal organization, no less important to the maintenance of life and sound health, than air, with, however, this great and essential difference, viz. that an individual may exist several days without any additional food, but not three minutes without air. Further, if he is deprived of but one of the ingredients of the atmosphere, oxygen, instant death is the consequence.

I believe, however, it will be found, in a vast majority of cases, where food is properly accounted a cause of illness, this is produced by *too great a quantity being eaten*, or by an alteration of its properties by the refinements of cookery, and the addition of stimulating condiments. Plethora, and its long train of ills, are the results of over feeding, and over stimulation, but these are not the diseases of the poor. Among them we rather find, Cachexia,* Scrofula, and all the consequences of debility and vitiation, which are far more attributable to an imperfection and paucity in the necessaries of life, more especially of air, clothing, and cleanliness. Dyspepsia, almost wholly the effect of improper dieting, is scarcely ever found in Dispensary practice, while no disease is more common with the wealthier classes. All the ills for which the poor seek advice, whether peculiar to them or not, are aggravated, and altered in character, not by the food they eat, so much as by the air they breathe, and their other depraved physical circumstances of life. The sin of intemperance in eating cannot be laid at the doors of the cellars, and the entrances of the alleys and courts, while that of intemperance in drinking, though a dreadful addition to the horrors of his already too degraded physical and moral condition, is, with the ignorant and poverty-stricken troglodyte, a venial fault, in comparison with the pampered luxuriousness and equally injurious and intemperate, though more refined indulgences of his wealthier and more responsible neighbor. 11

I conclude this part of my subject, by calling attention to a few facts, illustrating the relative duration of life, of different classes of population ; premising that, in consequence of the imperfection of our means in obtaining the statistics of vitality and mortality of our own

* A bad habit of body, known by a depraved or vitiated state of the solids and fluids.

population, it will be necessary to go abroad for some of the facts which bear upon this important inquiry.

It is ascertained that in civilized communities, one-fourth part of all the human race who are born, die before attaining their first year; more than one-third before arriving at five years of age, and before the age of twenty, one half the human race, it is supposed, cease to exist. On referring to the last two annual reports of the mortality of this city, I observe that of the persons who *have died*, about the same proportion as is above stated, of all who are *born*, that is, about one-fourth died in the first year, about one-third before five years, *but more than one half* before twenty years of age.

No facts could speak in louder tones of the injurious operations of the circumstances of civilized life. That one-half should die before arriving fairly upon the broad platform of strength, usefulness, and hope in the world, is the significant finger pointing with unerring certainty to the sins of ignorance, and abuse of the bountiful and unfailing means of life and comfort lavished upon us by Providence, which lie at our doors. Can this ignorance of the laws of health be excused, or can this abuse of Heaven's bounties be defended? There can be no justification for either in the eye of the Creator and Giver of all things.

The savages who live in the caves of the earth, because they have neither the knowledge, nor means, to build houses, are pardonable; yet their natural instincts teach them the uses and necessity of fresh air and exercise. Yet we, who claim to be intelligent and civilized, who are taught the minutest particulars of nature's laws, suffer our numbers and strength, the bones, and sinews, and hearts of our people, to waste and die away in narrow and gloomy caverns of our own construction, with a rapidity surpassing that of the combined torrents of pestilence and war. Our sin is the greater that we permit these things in the midst of the light of science, and under the inspiring dictates of a religion, whose most prominent features are charity and love.

In the celebrated report of the Sanitary Condition of the Laboring Population of Great Britain, Mr. Chadwick gives the following, among other instances, of the comparative chances of life, in different classes of the community.

Truro.

No. of Deaths.		Aver. age of Dec'd.
33	Professional persons, or gentry and their families,	40 years.
138	Persons engaged in trade, or similarly circumstanced, and their families,	33 "
447	Laborers, Artisans, and their families,	28 "

Bolton Union (manufacturing district.)

103	Gentlemen, professional persons, and their families,	34 "
381	Tradesmen, and their families,	23 "
2232	Mechanics, servants, laborers, and their families,	18 "

Bethnal Green (manufacturing, chiefly domestic.)

101	Gentlemen, and persons engaged in Professions, and their families,	45 "
273	Tradesmen and their families,	26 "
1258	Mechanics, servants, laborers, and their families,	16 "

In Liverpool, a commercial, and not a manufacturing town, where, according to the report of Dr. Duncan, 40,000 people live in cellars, and where one in twenty-five of the population are annually attacked with fever, the mean chances of life appear to be still lower, than in Manchester, Leeds, or among the silk weavers of Bethnal Green. In size and character Liverpool is somewhat allied to New York, hence its vital statistics are more particularly interesting to us, as more likely to approach ours in similarity.

Liverpool, 1840.

No. of Deaths.		Aver. age of Dec'd.
137	Gentry, Professional persons, &c.	35 years.
1738	Tradesmen, and their families,	22 "
5597	Laborers, Mechanics, Servants, &c.	15 "

The following shows the difference in the average duration of life, between the inhabitants of a manufacturing and of an agricultural place, and it will be observed that the *laborers of the latter, attain to an age equal to the professional people, and gentry, of the former.*

	Average age of Death	
	in Manchester,	in Rutlandshire.
Professional persons, and gentry and their families,	38 years.	52 years.
Tradesmen and their families, (Farmers and Graziers		
included with Shopkeepers, in Rutlandshire,)	20 "	41 "
Mechanics, laborers and their families,	17 "	38 "

This comparison exhibits very clearly the advantages of a pure atmosphere, out-door occupation, domiciliary cleanliness, and above ground residence, Rutlandshire being distinguished for all these, and as a consequence, for a more orderly, steady, and respectable population.

The influence of degraded associations, of habitual neglect of cleanliness, and prostration of health by impure living, upon the moral habits of the people, and as impediments to their social and political improvement, is a question with which I propose now to occupy the reader's attention, for a brief space, in the hope, that if it can be shown that these are probable causes of misery and crime, there will be found herein an additional reason for the action of the City government upon the measures, I, or others may suggest, for the melioration of the condition of those classes of the community more exposed to their influences.

Let any one ask himself the question, whether his own self-respect, his carefulness to avoid improprieties of conduct, and to maintain cleanliness of house and person, are not greatly enhanced by the examples of those around him. I believe it will not be disputed that the practices of those with whom we associate, by choice or compulsion, possess a decided influence over not only our own acts and habits, but over our thoughts and even our judgments. Circumstances govern our lives, and precepts for good are feeble, unless accompanied by the strong arm of example. "Example is better than precept," was the lesson taught us daily in our school exercises in penmanship. All society regulates the conduct of its members, and its phases of character are marked by their deport-

ment and opinions. The "outcasts of society" constituting a very numerous tribe, form societies of their own, and stamp, in a degree, the character of the community of which they are a part. We have, as have all large cities, numbers of them with us, but they should be regarded, not as such by choice, so much as by *compulsion*—as the creatures of circumstances beyond their control.

The tide of emigration which now sets so strongly towards our shores, cannot be turned back. We *must* receive the poor, the ignorant, and the oppressed from other lands, and it would be better to consider them as coming filled with the energy of hope for happier days, and more useful labors, than they found at home. No one, I presume, seriously believes they come with bad intentions, and then whose fault is it that they live here in cellars more filthy than the cabins of whose wretchedness we hear so much, and for whose existence, half the blame is thrown upon the government they have left.

Let us first cast the beam from our own eye. *We are parties to their degradation, inasmuch as we permit the inhabitation of places, from which it is not possible improvement in condition or habits can come. We suffer the sub-landlord to stow them, like cattle, in pens, and to compel them to swallow poison with every breath. They are allowed, may it not be said required, to live in dirt, when the reverse, rather, should be enforced.*

This depressed physical condition, and bad moral and social habits and propensities, to my mind, have an intimate relation to each other—they stand clearly in the attitudes of cause and effect. For instance, how often do we find poverty to be the instigator of theft, and immoral indulgences the results of certain circumstances in life.

Men's passions are kept in check by the restrictions of the society in which they live. Remove those checks—take from the individuals the moral atmosphere in which they move, and their evil passions will rise.

In a family composed of several persons of both sexes, in circumstances admitting of their living in separate apartments, the restraints of the circle of which they are a part, compel an observance of the separation of the sexes, and other social proprieties. They grow up habituated to correct deportment and moral restraints, which accompany them into all their relations of life. But confine that same family to one room, compel them to perform all their personal and domestic duties in view of each other, to sleep, dress, and undress in each other's presence, and can it be doubted that the nice moral distinctions so necessary to a life of virtue, will be gradually subdued, or overthrown, the heart be hardened against the teachings of the moralist, and the wave of lustful passion become of increased power? Yet this is the condition of hundreds of families, who would gladly escape the Maelstrom of morals which threatens to engulf them. And this is undoubtedly a principal source of the dreadful amount of licentiousness infesting this city.

As breathing an impure atmosphere will produce a depressed tone of bodily feeling and positive physical disease, so will a vitiated moral at-

mosphere, induce a relaxed state of moral feeling, and positively licentious habits.

Whence issue, in times of riot and tumult, the disturbers of the peace, but from the cellars and alleys, where they have never been taught to respect themselves, much less others.

If a family of good disposition be reduced by force of circumstances to occupy the same premises with numbers of others of a different character, it will be next to impossible to maintain their former tone of morals, or domiciliary cleanliness and order, and they must soon lapse into the same habits and feelings as their neighbors, adding thus their numbers to those who before swelled the list of the profane and evil disposed.

I have remarked upon the influence of the impure atmosphere, the damp and crowded apartments, and other circumstances, upon the health of the poorer residents of New York:—the following extract from an able writer* must commend itself, in this connection, to the judgment of every right thinking man.

“Although it is most true that the calamity of sickness, or even of death itself, is nothing compared with crime, yet it is also true, that sickness induces poverty, which is one of the tempters to crime, and that a deranged condition of the physical system, often urges to vicious and destructive indulgences by the unnatural appetites which it creates, and thus ill health becomes the parent of guilt as well as of bodily pains. It exercises a powerful influence over feelings, temper, and disposition, and through these upon moral character.”

It follows, therefore, that a correction of the physical, will tend to abate the moral, evils of the community.

It is well known there has existed in this city for a series of years, an organization denominated the City Tract Society, which supports a number of Tract Missionaries, whose time is devoted to visiting the abodes of the humble and destitute, wherever the way may open, and carrying to them the words of moral and religious instruction—endeavoring to instil into their minds ideas of self-respect, and self-dependence, preaching to them temperance and virtue, enticing children to the Sabbath and public schools, relieving with what means they may possess, the physical necessities of the poor, and performing all other deeds which a mind actuated by benevolence and Christian love may do. Many of these gentlemen have been a long time engaged in this work, and probably no body of men possesses more thorough knowledge of the localities of this city, of the condition of its inhabitants, of the influence of circumstances upon the tone of morals in all classes, drawn from actual observation, or of the alterations and additions required in the police and sanitary codes, for the improvement of the city at large, and in its various particulars.

To these gentlemen I have applied for their opinions, and such illustrations, bearing upon this topic, as their prolonged and valuable experience may be supposed to have furnished them. I addressed to them

* Hon. Horace Mann.

the following queries—the subjoined responses, selected from among a number, must carry conviction to the minds of all who read them, that an effort is demanded of government, benevolence and wealth, to remove the impediments now lying in the way of the physical and moral improvement of the destitute classes of this city.

Queries addressed to the Tract Missionaries.

1st. To what extent does the congregation of different sexes, and various ages of the same family of the poor, in one apartment, influence their morals, and do they, or do they not, seem to place a lower estimate on moral character, (though free from actual vice,) than others, a grade above them in physical condition? In other words, have you observed an appreciation of morals and character, graduated according to the circumstances and condition of life?

2d. Have you found physical distress to present a bar to your moral and religious instructions, and do you think relief from their bodily ailments would enable you to be of greater service to the poor in your calling?

3d. Have you observed that personal and domiciliary negligence and filthiness tend to depress still more the moral sensibility, and make the poor more reckless of character—and do you believe, that domiciliary and personal cleanliness, though combined with an equal degree of poverty, give to the individual or family, more self-respect, more aptitude to receive instruction, and more happiness?

4th. If constrained by law to keep themselves, their furniture, clothing and dwellings, more clean, by frequent use of water and lime, do you think there would be a greater inclination to improve their associations, and obtain a better state of moral and social feeling?

5th. In your opinion would regular domiciliary visits by an officer of health, empowered to enforce a law to promote the cleanliness of house and persons, have any influence in raising the tone of feeling among the poor, as well as relieving sickness and prolonging life?

6th. Are there not many who would be pleased to be aided and instructed in the best mode of improving the condition of their dwellings, and be glad to receive the visits of such an officer?

7th. Can you relate any instances bearing on the subject, or applicable as illustrations to either of the queries?

From Rev. George Hatt, Missionary of 1st and 2d Wards.

Answer 1st. It is impossible to state to what extent a bad influence is produced by the congregation of different sexes in one apartment, but that it tends to debase the mind, and more especially in the female, prevents the development of that sensitive modesty which is her greatest charm, and her surest protection, I think no one can doubt. Still in my opinion, it is unfair and incorrect to measure appreciation of character by outward circumstances, or condition of life. The many offices to which the one apartment must be converted, produces a want of neatness, and personal cleanliness. A single fact will show some of the

evils of the one room system. As a Tract visiter knocked at the door of a room, he was invited in; he opened the door and entered, when, to his astonishment, he found a man entirely naked, sitting with his wife and children; the former was washing the shirt which the man had taken off. This was on a Sabbath day.

Answer 2d. Physical distress often prevents the poor, or indeed any class, from being benefited by religious instruction. But on the other hand, it often softens and prepares the mind for its more ready reception; I believe the possession of the ability, judiciously to relieve the pressing wants of the poor, and to alleviate their bodily ailments, would be of great service in the attempt to elevate their moral and social condition.

Answer 3d. I should presume that recklessness of character *generally* precedes negligence and filthiness—for instance, I have known a man who had a happy home to become a drunkard; this vice soon reduced him from an industrious, cleanly man, to a reckless, loathsome being. His wife, too, having become discouraged, falls into the snare. Now the once happy home is a scene of filth and confusion. Go to work with that family, become instrumental in restoring them to sobriety and industry, and the change will be as apparent in the second instance as it was in the first.

As it respects the latter part of this question, I would add, that much, very much, depends upon the manner in which individuals are brought up. Some families will with six dollars per week, appear more respectable, and possess more self-respect than others with ten dollars, with an equal number in the family. The difficulty in most cases is in the training. Hence the importance of educating the young.

Answer 4th. In my opinion constraint by law ought to be on the landlord. No landlord ought to be allowed to let a place which is known to be unhealthy under a heavy penalty. There are thousands in this city who are pent up in cellars, with ground for the floor, into which I would not put a hog, if I wanted him to thrive. Last winter I visited a place in Washington-street, where in one such hole, thirteen persons were staying, four adults, and nine children. At times the tide came in; it was always damp, and there was a woman sick with Pleurisy.

Answer 5th. Then in reference to the fifth question, I would say, that the health officer should be empowered to levy the fine upon landlords who transgressed the law. The officer should be empowered also to remove the family into some healthy abode, taking care that the fine be enough to cover expenses, and that having done so, the unhealthy place should be locked up, and the key kept by the officer, until a guarantee be given, that, if possible, the place be rendered habitable.

Answer 6th. I would recommend that the corporation build, and encourage the building of houses suitable for the poor, so constructed that each family may have at least two rooms; do this, and many of those evils which now exist will be done away, and the blessing of many who are now ready to perish, will come upon them.

From J. B. Horton, *Missionary of the 7th Ward.*

New York August 23d, 1844.

DR. GRISCOM.—DEAR SIR—Your *questions* in relation to the demoralizing influences resulting from the *unhappy physical condition* of a multitude of families in this city—both as it regards the numbers of all ages and each sex, *jammed into one apartment*—that with some miserable additions to its list of uses reminds us of the poor cobbler's stall in the song, which "He us'd for kitchen, for parlor, for hall,"—and the negligence of personal and domiciliary cleanliness; with others concerning the best means of obviating those evils, requesting me to give such answers to each and all, as my judgment and experience shall dictate, with such illustration of facts, as my Missionary labors in this city for ten years past may have furnished, are before me, and shall receive due attention.

For I hail with joy any feasible project, or attempt, to meliorate the *natural or moral condition* of man, and especially of that class of my own fellow-citizens, who so far from reposing on beds of roses or down, seem doomed to endless toil by day—and by night to lie down, perhaps in a crowded, uncleanly, and unventilated apartment, where before their slumbers are ended, the air has been so often inhaled, that it would need but little farther diminution of its vital qualities, to become *so foul* as to cause them "*to sleep, to wake no more.*" And I rejoice, sir, that *you* have undertaken the task of presenting to the authorities of this city and the public, such views of the physical and moral condition of our city, and the appropriate means of improving it in both respects, as will, I trust, not only do honor to your head and heart, but lead ultimately to such sanitary regulations, as shall make this great emporium of the commerce of the Western world, not only as renowned for *natural and moral purity*, as for the amount of her wealth and the extent of her commercial enterprise, but as the exuberant goodness of God in bestowing on her naturally a pure air, and civilly and artificially the free use of the Holy Bible and Croton water, has given her the means to be.

I now proceed to answer the questions propounded. And first, you inquire, "To what extent does the congregation of different sexes, and various ages of the same family of the poor, in *one apartment*, influence their morals, and do they, or do they not, seem to place a lower estimate on moral character, than others placed a grade above them in physical condition?" As it regards the *extent* of the evil influence on morals, arising from such-herding together, of all ages and both sexes, it is impossible for me to determine, but that it is of most pernicious tendency, no one who has the slightest acquaintance with poor human nature, can, for a moment, entertain a doubt. Under such circumstances, it is impossible from the nature of things to prevent the instinctive modesty of youth from receiving a mortal wound, by a constant familiarity with scenes and sounds fit only for the greatest privacy—"For (truly) nature's blush by custom is wiped off."

And thus one of the greatest barriers and defences of chastity, is in the very morning of life overturned and destroyed; that jewel of such inestimable value, that the means of its preservation is worthy of the most pro-

found consideration of the statesman and philanthropist. That the physical condition of an individual or a family, has a powerful and important bearing on the moral character, for weal or woe, needs no labor to prove; although neither of us has any idea of embracing Fourierism—the main doctrine of which, I believe, is, that most of the ills of life, as now experienced in the world, flow not from the moral obliquity of human nature, but from the *wrong, civil, and physical* position of men. “Poverty and riches are both severe temptations,” the latter, however, by far more dangerous, at least to the final and eternal interests of men. For though abject poverty may lead to brutal degradation, placing families even in Christian communities in circumstances as unfavorable to chastity, and the common decencies of life, as the Sandwich Islanders were previous to the introduction of Christianity among them by American Missionaries—when they slept in their *one apartment*, men, women and children, *with their hogs*, “cheek by jowl!” Yet riches foster appetites and passions still more hostile to virtue and religion; hence it was averred by the Maker and Savior of men, that “it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Extremes meet—therefore I have made some of the foregoing observations, to show that every gradation in the circumstances of an individual or a family, from abject poverty to “*a happy mediocrity*,” defined exactly in Agur’s prayer, “Neither poverty nor riches,” (which even the insensate infidel Tom Paine, had not the moral hardihood to deny as replete with true wisdom,) will have a good influence on their morals, but not beyond that point.

I have farther to say in relation to this question, that though I have not the shadow of a doubt resting on my mind, as to the deteriorating moral effect of a large family embracing both sexes and all ages, being pent up in one apartment, where *all things* must be done *in common*, yet I have no striking facts as an illustration in proof to give, but have a distinct impression that where I have met with families so circumstanced, or among the abject poor, their moral sensibilities in some respects were very obtuse, and in nothing that I recollect more often manifested than the shameful nudities of children.

In regard to your second question, “Have you found physical distress to present a bar to your moral and religious instructions, and do you think their relief from bodily ailments would enable you to be of greater service to the poor in your calling?” I answer, that I have often found persons and families, in such circumstances of distress, from want of food and raiment, or by excruciating bodily pain, I thought it would be preposterous and vain to say much to them on the subject of religion, until their minds and bodies were somewhat relieved and disenthralled from the absorbing power of want and pain by physical appliances. And always under such circumstances, I have gone to work to procure food and clothing, or a physician and medicine! to prepare the way for moral and religious culture. And happy should I be if the facility for ministering to the poor and suffering were many fold increased, as it regards giving the worthy poor both food and physic; thereby increasing our prospect of being useful to them in religious

matters. And I rejoice in the society recently organized in this city, by a truly intelligent and philanthropic class of our wealthy citizens, for "the improvement of the condition of the poor," who have already prepared the way for the Tract Missionary to exert the happiest influence on hundreds of families.

As proof that physical distress and bodily ailments present a bar to moral and religious culture, I have only to assure you, that the common answer given to Missionaries by persons in such circumstances, when asked if they wish to seek religion, or avail themselves of the means of grace by attending church, or of Sabbath and public school instruction for their children, is this, "Oh, we are so poor—we have such trouble to get our daily bread, so destitute of comfortable and decent apparel, that we have no time to think about religion—cannot go decently to church, nor send our children to Sabbath or public schools."

In answer to your third question, viz. "Have you observed that personal and domiciliary negligence and filthiness tend to depress still more the moral sensibilities, and make the poor still more reckless of character; and do you believe that domiciliary and personal cleanliness, though combined with equal poverty, give the individual or family more self-respect, more aptitude to receive instruction, and more happiness?" I reply, that I have observed those families and persons who live habitually in squalid filth, negligent of personal and domiciliary cleanliness, like wicked men and seducers, wax morally worse and worse. And were it proper, I should like to introduce you to two such families, who are now prominently before my mind, for whom I have long labored, but apparently in vain, as it regards their moral reformation, while on the other hand I could introduce you to those who, though equally poor, yet careful about their persons and places, have received instruction gladly, and as we trust with lasting profit—and none can doubt for a moment that the latter class are by far more happy; though through a perverted taste, it may be possible for a savage "to glory in the deepest jet."

Your fourth and fifth questions involve so nearly the same thing—a mere requisition of my opinion, "Whether the interference of municipal authority—constraining by law, and law officers—the dirty and negligent, to take better care of their persons, furniture, and apartments, would subserve any valuable purpose, or raise a better tone of moral and social feeling?"—for brevity's sake, I shall consider and answer them as one, by saying that I can see no good reason why a State and City that have *legislated so immensely*, and sacrificed so much public and private property to establish and execute Quarantine Laws, (many of them of more than doubtful utility,) to prevent the importation of Yellow Fever, Cholera, and the Plague, into our populous city, should by any means judge it absurd or unnecessary, to enact a few laws, and appoint a few officers to inspect certain persons and places within the city, (with power to remove) where and by whom all those infectious and contagious maladies may be *manufactured*, and of such a quality, too, as to be perhaps more dangerous than those of foreign growth.

In regard to your 6th question, "Whether there are not many families

that would like to be aided and instructed in the best mode of improving the condition of their dwellings, and would be glad to receive the visits of such an officer?" I answer, that the feeling with which such an officer would be received, must materially depend on the ability and tact with which he would discharge a duty so delicate—for delicate indeed it must be to interfere with the private concerns of any individual, however poor he may be—that claims to be *one of the independent citizens of the United States—one of the sovereign people!* However, I do not believe, though the task should be arduous, but that some such regulations might be introduced into our city, with the happiest results. Yet I should perfectly despair of the success of any such sanitary measures if adopted, should those who have the power of appointing the necessary officers, manifest the same reckless indifference to their talents and attainments in medical skill and science, as we have sometimes heretofore had the misfortune to see manifested in the appointment of health officers.

I have now gone through with your questions, dear sir, and answered them according to my best ability, and the limited time allotted me; but not perhaps in a way that will be satisfactory to yourself, or available for the public good. You will, however, I have no doubt, in your kindness, take "the will (in this instance) to serve," for the deed.

But before I close this already long communication, I beg leave to suggest to you one thing to be brought forward in some part of your work, viz. to show the far greater propriety and necessity of having an Inspector General, with plenty of sub-officers, who shall determine *where, and what kind of a house* shall be built for a human being, or a family to inhabit; and how much room—and how many rooms, shall be rented to families consisting of so many persons, and such sexes, than an inspector general and his posse, to examine dead beef and pork, flour, tobacco, &c., that nobody is forced to buy or use if bad, while the poor are literally forced by poverty and griping landlords, to live in dens and holes, where immorality and death are speedily engendered. Yet still farther and *above all*, do, my dear sir, bring out most prominently the absolute futility of any sanitary measures, for the health, or morals of this city as a whole, until that *curse of all curses* most direful, that most prolific source of *poverty, crime, disease, and death*, "*Intoxicating drink*," be considered and treated legislatively and judiciously as a most dangerous, deleterious, and deadly poison, and those who make and sell the same as a beverage for gain, as unworthy, not only of the name of Christian but of man, and should henceforth be ranked with fiends—and those who drink it as such—as maniacs, and fools, and treated accordingly.

With much respect, yours,

J. B. HORTON.

From Samuel Russell, Jr., Missionary of the 8th Ward.

New York, Aug. 26th, 1844.

DR. GRISCOM—DEAR SIR—Whether the sentiment of the great Teacher, "The poor ye have always," is the mere record of an important *fact* or a *prediction*, I shall not stop to inquire; one thing, however,

is certain, it ever has been, and is now, a sentiment of *truth* ; and a true disciple of that teacher, will rejoice in any efforts of others, and contribute his own, for the well-being of that large class of the community.

Having been engaged for several years in labors for the benefit of the poor, the following opinions have been formed, and are submitted in reply to your series of questions ; hoping that they may, in some humble measure, subserve the best interests of that class whose servant I am, and hope to be, during the remainder of my life.

1st. The instances are many, in which one or more families, of from three to seven or more members, of all ages, and both sexes, are congregated in a single, and often contracted apartment. Here they eat, drink, sleep, wash, dress and undress, without the possibility of that privacy which an innate modesty imperatively demands ; in sickness or health it is the same. What is the consequence ? The sense of shame, that greatest, surest safeguard to virtue, except the grace of God, is gradually blunted, ruined, and finally destroyed. Now scenes are witnessed and participated in, with a countenance of brass, the very *thought* of which, once would have filled the sensitive heart of modesty with pain, and covered its cheek with burning blushes. The mind of one thus brought in daily and nightly contact with such scenes, must become greatly debased, and its fall before the assaults of vice rendered almost certain.

In reply to the latter part of the question, allow me to say that neither extreme of society is favourable to the highest appreciation of morality. The rich man who delights in sinful indulgence, and retains his position in society by his gold, places really no higher estimate upon virtue for its *own sake*, than the veriest wretch, who in the eye of day, wallows in the very mire of moral pollution. From such a one, to him who retains his place among his fellows by his *virtues*, there is, doubtless, a regular gradation in the appreciation of morals and character.

2d. Physical distress often introduces me to the acquaintance of families, when if they were in other circumstances, access to them might not be obtained ; yet before any moral or spiritual instruction will be regarded, the wants and ailments of body must first be cared for.

Before the formation of the "Society for the improvement of the condition of the poor," my usefulness was greatly curtailed from the impossibility of ministering to the physical wants of the poor ; now it is otherwise, thanks to the noble men comprising that society.

3d. This question, I answer unhesitatingly, in the affirmative.

4th. The law of kindness in the heart, and the words of sympathy upon the lips, afford the surest avenue to the confidence of the poor, and will succeed when legal coercion will utterly fail. Use the former when you *can*, the latter when you *must*.

5th. The success or failure of such visitation would depend very much, if not entirely, upon the character of the officer, and his manner of performing such visitation. If possessed of a kind and affable manner, and if a desire for the comfort and permanent good of the poor were discernible in all his deportment, he would hardly be regarded as

an officer of law, but as a friend to be confided in, and his instructions appreciated and followed—if otherwise, he would be looked upon with mistrust, and probably resisted.

6th. This question I answer in the affirmative, provided the officer possess the qualifications named in the reply to the fifth query; and also provided the expense be borne by the landlord, or the public—otherwise, in the negative.

7th. A multiplicity of cases bearing on this whole subject have led me to the conclusion to which I have come, and expressed above; but no particular one now occurs to my mind, of sufficient interest, to warrant being repeated here.

The published reports of the “City Tract Society,” in numerous instances, show what means *have* resulted in the *elevation of the poor*, and to those documents I would beg leave respectfully to refer you.

Yours, &c.

SAMUEL RUSSELL, JR.

Missionary, 8th Ward.

From Jno. H. Bulen, Missionary of the 13th Ward.

New York, August 20th, 1844.

DEAR SIR—The subject of your recent note, making certain inquiries, is one of no ordinary interest to any one who is endeavoring, in a sphere however circumscribed, or by means however humble, to be instrumental in elevating the moral condition of man.

The intimate relation of the moral to the physical condition, may not be so easily and precisely defined, as practically understood; and perhaps your end will be as fully attained by eliciting the results of experience, as by any fine wrought, philosophical disquisition of that relation. I am truly glad you have taken the subject in hand. I have long wished that some one, able to make his voice heard by the community, would speak out in language to be understood. Should you succeed in awakening an interest in the community, which shall result in the domiciliary renovation at which you aim, you will need no reward but the rich consciousness of having rendered valuable aid to the philanthropic enterprises of the day.

Nearly ten years' constant intercourse with the poor of this city, has fully convinced me that no greater obstacle is presented to their moral elevation, than that want of self-respect, and recklessness of character, induced by associations almost impossible to avoid, under existing arrangements, when very much reduced in pecuniary circumstances.

Suppose a respectable mechanic or merchant reduced by unavoidable misfortune to penury. He must leave his comfortable home. Accustomed to fulfil his promises, the least possible promise for rent will, in his opinion, be the best arrangement for the present; and, however the hearts of those accustomed to domiciliary cleanliness and comfort, may sicken as they enter where twenty or more families are domiciled on the same lot, with passage and yard conveniences common to all, yet they will make a virtue of necessity—it is a shelter—its walls encircle all now dear to their hearts—and most prized of all, perhaps, because it hides them from their acquaintances of more prosperous

days. They, of course, purify their narrow home, and, as far as may be, make it comfortable. When weary nature must have rest, their one room, which has served both as kitchen and parlor, must also be their place of retirement.

What modesty would recently have shrunk from, must now be submitted to, and once submitted to, is ever after less and less painful. Then commences a deterioration of moral perception. It is impossible for one, of so many families, to keep the places common to all, clean and orderly; and what is habitually witnessed in the halls and the apartments of neighbors, will soon be permitted, for the present, in their own, especially as none accustomed to other appearances will probably be their visitors.

This downward course is so rapid, and the result so certain, that few will fail to discern the cause. Yet as the influence of this physical and mental condition upon the moral susceptibilities, may not be so apparent, there may be a necessity for saying, in answer to your first inquiry—that I have observed a depreciation of susceptibility of moral and religious teachings, towards either extreme of society; but as the poor are more accessible, my opportunities have been almost exclusively confined to that extreme. With this explanation, I answer, unhesitatingly, that I have observed, with, perhaps, no more than the usual exceptions to a general rule, a graduation of appreciation of morals and character, according to physical condition. And in answer to your second, that I have often found an obtuseness of perception induced by physical condition, an insuperable bar to moral and religious instruction. And to your third—that I have no doubt that domiciliary and personal cleanliness would increase self-respect, and an aptitude to receive moral and religious instruction, while their negligence would diminish them.

To your fourth and fifth inquiries, I may be allowed to answer, that compulsory measures in relation to domiciliary arrangements are ordinarily, peculiarly unwelcome, especially to the poor, who are usually jealous over what they conceive to be their now too circumscribed rights. And yet so little of the responsibility of the accumulated impurities of their crowded habitations rests on a single family, that I think I may say in answer to your sixth inquiry, that the majority of them would be glad to receive official aid and instruction. There are, probably, but very few who do not think they would be glad to live more cleanly, if their neighbors would render it possible by doing so too. Any improvement, although constrained, would undoubtedly increase their self-respect, and, of course, their happiness, and facilitate the efforts of those who are endeavoring to advance their spiritual interests.

Most of the cases of which I have kept any record, would rather illustrate the influence of improved morals on physical condition. And yet there is no doubt of their reciprocal influence. Not unfrequently, the commencement of the elevating process is the relief of some physical distress, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, or healing the sick, by the use of such means as the benevolent supply; always

endeavoring to keep before the mind those great truths on which we rely, through the efficient agency of the Spirit, for moral renovation.

As an illustration of the depreciating process alluded to in your first inquiry, I recollect a case in point, although not recorded. An intimate friend of mine was acquainted with a young lady, about thirty years ago, then moving in good society, with moral susceptibilities, and a refined, discriminating sense of propriety, somewhat above mediocrity. At about the age of twenty-two, she married, as was thought, respectably. A few years proved that the husband's morals and habits were not such as to secure respect or independence; and they gradually sunk, and my friend lost sight of them.

About six years since, a child was brought by a Tract visitor, from a filthy cellar, and put into the Sabbath school class of my friend, who, upon learning the name of the child, visited the mother, and found her to be the same person known years ago as a young lady of refinement. She had now lost all ambition; her husband was a worthless inebriate; her children, with countenances of promise, were, like their mother, completely at home in their most miserable apartment, rendered exceedingly so by neglect. Her moral susceptibilities were as entirely changed as her physical condition. Religious truth seemed to make no impression upon her mind—her heart seemed callous. Speak of her early life, and the fountain of feeling seemed to break up, and the tears would flow. A deep impression rests upon my mind, that lost as she was, if she could have been placed in circumstances of comfort and cleanliness approximating to those of her youth, the probabilities would have been in favor of her moral renovation. As this was beyond my reach, attention was turned to more hopeful cases, alas! in too many instances to meet the same disappointment from the same cause, and she was again lost sight of.

Truly, yours,

J. H. BULEN.

From Rev. Isaac Orchard, Missionary of the 15th Ward.

Bedford Street, August 20th, 1844.

DR. GRISCOM,—DEAR SIR—In relation to the questions you have proposed, I would group together the 1st, 2d, and 3d, as relating to a prevalent evil, and the 4th, 5th, and 6th, as relating to a proposed remedy; and this I do the more readily, because the points suggested under the former class, appear to me to be almost self-evident, and the remarks I may make upon the latter class, may be more conveniently made upon the three questions collectively, than singly.

1st, 2d, and 3d. The extent, concerning which the first question inquires, is, I fear, very great, and frequently leads to actual evil. To the points suggested in these questions, I would give an affirmative answer, regarding them all as general rules, liable to some exception. Thus a person of coarse mind and manners may be found associating with the refined and polite, or a refined and polite person with the ill-behaved and uncouth; but it is not there we would seek for them. Applying whatever experience I have obtained on this subject, I am induced to regard it as a general law of our nature, that minds and manners

should take an impress from those with which they associate ; and this is painfully evident in many cases, where we observe those who have fallen from opulence, fashion, and high standing, into poverty. Suppose a lady, accustomed to luxury and elegant society, so reduced that she has to earn her living by labor, and necessarily to mingle amongst the poor. You may see traces of her former condition, yet they will be but little more than traces. Compelled to bring her mind to her circumstances, to associate with, and perhaps receive instruction from, persons whom she once would have avoided, she must either be solitary in her manners, or despised as seeking pre-eminence, or she must come down to the standard of those around her, and the last of these will be, in most cases, preferred, although it will involve a great diminution of self-respect. When independent in fortune, that person felt independent in mind, and abhorred any thing mean—but when reduced to dependence upon another for bread, or even for labor, and seeing that the most obsequious obtain the most smiles, then the cravings of want will humble the high spirit, and self-interest will induce that person to submit to the meanness of obsequiousness, although subjecting herself, at the same time, to the most painful feelings and self-reproach. It is evidently very difficult, almost impossible, for persons in general to avoid the influence of physical condition upon mind. Thus it is with those who have sunk from an elevated position, and it will be the same with those who have sunk from an humble position to one still lower. Perhaps the majority of charity seeking persons amongst us, may be of this class ; they were never rich, but perhaps were quite above want ; now they have sunk in circumstances from some cause, and the associates with whom they mingle are of a lower grade than in former days. This they do not know how to avoid, for these are now their neighbors. To keep on good terms with them, they mingle in their company, unite in their sentiments, and associate in their vices.

To some passer-by, it appears strange that in the block standing south of the Catholic Cathedral, and other places contiguous, there are so many gin-shops ; and they ask where are the customers to support these shops ? They cannot be in the neighboring houses, for there also customers are wanted—the bottles are exhibited in house after house, and I have known two such shops in one house ;—whence came the customers ? Now this is a question that the licensing power might have asked before they granted their license to sell, and there would have been nothing ultra in it, however ultra might have been the question, whether or not such sale should be licensed at all ? But in the multiplicity of cases, it is evident the good fathers of the city forgot to ask the question. Is it possible that a Catholic Cathedral, like a theatre, can be the attractor of a circle of gin-shops ? No ! no ! to suppose that these shops are sustained by the worshippers at St. Patrick's, when going to, or returning from church, would be very unkind, and perhaps very unjust ; for I have discovered that those houses contain, to a considerable extent, *their own customers*. It is unquestionably true, that when persons sink into poverty, they do not like to be scowled upon—they feel it even more than in better days—yet people

will scowl upon them ; their old friends and acquaintances will avoid them, lest they should want something. Landlords will be more particular than ever as to their rent, and when they have got it, not be respectful, and scarcely civil. Some benevolent person calls to inquire as to a poor family needing aid—the landlord says nothing that will help them, and the room appears (in the estimation of some short-sighted philanthropists) too good for a family receiving charity, and besides there are several articles of decent furniture—the visitor is dissatisfied, and leaves, but leaves no aid behind. The broken down spirit is prostrated—hope is blasted—in a little while the few decent articles are gone that food may be obtained, and the poor, dispirited castaways seek a refuge where all, being poor, will sympathize with each other, and where the landlord, even if he charge higher rent than they gave before, will speak soothingly, and though he advise them to drown their cares in whiskey, will be very faithful in giving them an excellent character to all inquirers. Lodgings for such persons, on such terms, may be found in the houses I have described. These houses contain, I say, to a large extent, their own customers ; for they are the pauper's rendezvous, and offer lodgings to beggars of every grade. They seem to be always open for new comers, and in some way or other they can accommodate them. There are various neighborhoods of this kind in this city, and I have called your attention to the one named, that I may give you an illustration of the remarks I have made. In one of these houses, in a garret, with sloping roof and low ceiling, one small, broken window, no bedstead, nor other bedding than a few bundles of rags upon the floor, I have found three families of men, women, and children : there they lived, and there they all slept. Now, if a woman accustomed to humble life, or decent poverty, be constrained to remove to such a place, what must be the effect on her mind, her morals, and her habits ? At first, she will recoil from undressing in the presence of a strange man, but soon she will do it without a blush. Is she a wife ? There are other wives and their husbands in the room, without even a curtain to hide the most private transactions. That which transpires cannot be unobserved, though seeking the darkest recess, and soon it will be imitated without secrecy and without scruple. Children, too, will see them, and think, and imitate—and thus become depraved in their thoughts, desires, and practices. Can any one doubt that there must be rapid declension in morals, in both parents and children ? or that a bar is here opposed to moral or religious instruction ? or that this state of things was consequent on the circumstances and condition of life ? Beside this, persons living thus, are almost necessarily drunkards, whether men or women. Drunkenness, probably, reduced them to this state, but if it did not, the landlord would hardly allow them to remain in the house, or their fellow lodgers, in the room, unless they became such. If questioned upon this subject, they are accustomed to reply that they do drink, but not too much ; yet the question, what quantity is too much, is one upon which their opinion and mine would not agree. When the visitors from the City Tract Society, with whom I am accustomed to

act, succeed in awakening in the minds of such persons a sense of their degradation, their first care is to cut them off from the society that misery loves. If, then, they can be induced to break off from their debased habits and associations, and to keep themselves and the clothes they give them, clean—and especially, if they can be induced to work, then some hope is entertained that they will listen with attention to religious instruction; but not till then.

4th, 5th, and 6th. As to the remedy proposed for these evils, I think there can be no doubt that if *the love* of cleanliness could be instilled into their minds by *moral means*, all the good you suggest would result from it, and real good would result if cleanliness were secured by *any* means; but I think it very problematical whether this could be obtained by coercion. Unless the will assents, there must be constant evasion, and but little will be accomplished. There is that in the nature of man which will induce him to respect advice, if it be given with evident kindness, respect, and disinterestedness, but to reject real benefits if they be forced upon him against his will. The poorer classes often imagine that they possess rights which they do not, and no persons are more jealous of what they deem their rights than these persons are, or more ready to resent and oppose any infringement of them. I hold it to be a sound principle that no one has a right to do wrong; but many would dispute this, or if they admitted it, the question would arise, what is wrong? I regard it as wrong for any family, by neglect of cleanliness, to surround itself with a fetid atmosphere; but there are multitudes of the poor, or rather that class of the poor particularly interested, who imagine they have a right to do as they please in this matter, and that it would be a wrong that should be resisted, if any one interfered with this right. It seems therefore necessary, as a preliminary measure, to correct the judgment, for it is not that which a man ought to believe, but that which he does believe, that regulates his conduct. If this be not done, will he not regard what you propose, as a high-handed measure of the rich for the oppression of the poor? And if the poor man's shanty be visited more frequently than the rich man's mansion, will he not regard the law as partial and unjust, and probably as unconstitutional? And if this estimation of the law prevail, can it be carried into effect? It requires something more than legislation to convince the judgment, and no legislation, though based upon the soundest principles, will be generally respected, if it be opposed to popular error. I can imagine that there are many who would be glad to receive the visits of a health officer, *if he* were gentle, kind, and un-officious—if he had the confidence of the family, and if he caused all cleaning and improvement to be done without expense or inconvenience to the tenant—but *not else*. I have been accustomed to visit the poor during the last forty years, and experience convinces me that if a wealthy individual, when bestowing a gift, find fault with the dirtiness of a place, he must do it with gentleness, and with due regard to feelings, and with no assumption of superiority, or he will exclude from the mind all sense of gratitude for the gift bestowed. Or if the person communicating kindness be known as the almoner of others, everything

like scolding, and bluster, and importance, will be still more offensive ; and though regard for the yet ungiven dollar that he holds between his fingers, may preserve the peace until he leaves the room, then will there be a bursting forth of pent-up indignation ; and though at his future visits he may be received with civility, it will be the civility of hypocrisy. How then can we expect that the official intrusion, without a peace-offering, of a public officer into the place which, however poor, the poor man calls his castle, will be received with favor ? He may, indeed, be clothed with legal authority to enter the place, and there to look into holes and corners, enforce the scrubbing of the floor, the liming of the walls, and the cleansing of the furniture, and oblige the woman to wash herself and her children, comb their hair, and scour their clothes ; and all this may be important to the welfare of the family, and the health of the neighborhood—but it will be more likely to cause a breach of the peace, than to be regarded as a kindness.

There is a power somewhat similar in England, given to the governors of the poor ; but in that country, under monarchical government, rights are often proportioned to property ; laws are made to benefit or coerce distinct classes, and strength is given to the government by clothing it with vast powers to be used whenever discreet—that is, in cases of urgency. So with the law ; the spirit of Englishmen would not submit to the every day enforcement of the power it gives, and therefore it is not to be found in every day life, but in the Statute book, ready for use in case of pestilence, or other apparent necessity. *Then* such a law would be really valuable. They have it in reserve for such a season, and it might be well if we had a similar law to be used under similar circumstances ; for then, the judgment of every one showing its importance and necessity, it would be enforced without difficulty. Of this we have an illustration in the operation of quarantine laws. The great plague of London, caused by the arrival in the port of an infected cargo of hides, and various other cases, have impressed on the minds of men the horror of a plague, and the great danger of its being so introduced into a city or nation. Hence, every one sees and feels the necessity of a ship being inspected ; yet that inspection is not hailed with pleasure, but submitted to as a necessary evil. Such, at least, I have found to be the case ; and I was one of about 160 persons who terminated a tedious and almost suffocating voyage at this port, while cholera was raging both here and in Europe. The same acquiescence in domestic inspection could be secured, I presume, only in the same way—that is, by the judgment being convinced that the measure is just and necessary. But how is the judgment of men to be so convinced, and especially in a season of general health ? Not by the enactment of a new law giving new powers ; but by moral means. If we had an awful pestilence, and all the physicians united in declaring its cause to have been the filthiness of the dwellings of the poor, it would no doubt produce an impression—though perhaps even then conviction would not be produced unless dicta were sustained by demonstration.

Yours, very truly, ISAAC ORCHARD,
Sec. of C. T. Society, and Missionary of 15th Ward.

There is one other aspect in which the relations of the state or community, to its citizens, are to be viewed, which cannot be omitted here, without doing both parties injustice, especially as in this connexion, the relation is very intimate, as well as important. I refer to the dependence of the community upon the labors of its members, for its prosperity, support, and advancement. The influence exerted by a single individual upon the character and capacity of a government, is well marked and freely acknowledged, when men of commanding intellect step out from the common ranks. No one, for example, can measure the degree of influence exerted upon the character of this country, or of mankind, by Washington, Franklin, or Fulton, or upon the prosperity of this state by the genius of Dewitt Clinton. And so on downwards through the various gradations, and the ever varying abilities, physical and mental, of the masses of individuals, to the most insignificant, it is impossible not to see that each one possesses more or less influence upon the condition of the community, and by his peculiar labors, adds to it, or saves for it. How many conflagrations have been prevented by the devotion to his calling of the sooty and despised chimney sweep? while thousands of dollars have been rescued from filth and nothingness, by the industry of the degraded Chiffonier.*

Now, a great part of the wealth of the community consists in its physical labor. "Labor is wealth." The manufacturer, the artisan, the builder, *all*, depend upon the skill and strength of those employed to do their work. Who then will say that labor of the most insignificant kind should not be protected, improved, and facilitated, that the laborer of the smallest capacity should not be strengthened to the utmost, by careful training and education? It very often happens that almost the minutest muscles of the human body (those of the hands and fingers) are those which perform the most important and delicate work; so do we frequently find the most essential part of a magnificent structure, as of an engine, or a building, requires the labor of the poorest and roughest operative. Sound vigorous health is an essential pre-requisite to the proper performance of all labor.

The following passage, from an author before quoted,† written for an analogous subject, is so directly applicable, so appropriate to my purpose, and so forcible, that no apology will be required for its length.

"This subject has merits which should command the attention of the statesman and political economist. All investments to preserve or increase the public health, would be reimbursed many fold, in an increased capacity for production. One of the most important items in a nation's wealth, consists in the healthfulness and vigor, enjoyed by its people. All agriculturists and manufacturers must feel the force of this remark in regard to their own workmen; and they would feel it still more, if

* As an instance of the perseverance and frugality of this class of operatives, I was lately informed of one who, by his dirty trade, has amassed \$400, which he was about investing in Western lands. Hundreds of these people derive a good support from the business in this city.

† Hon. Horace Mann.—Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Education of Massachusetts.

they were obliged at their own expense to support those workmen during all periods of sickness or incapacity to labor; and this is the relation in which the state stands to its citizens. It has been said by some writers on political economy, that from one-seventh to one-eighth of all the wealth of a country originates in the *labor of each year*. Hence, if any nation or community should cease from production for seven or eight years, the whole of its wealth,—houses, lands, goods, money—would be consumed. What a forcible idea of the value of labor, is presented by this fact! Yet, what a sick workman or operative would be to a capitalist who was obliged to maintain him, a sick citizen is to the republic. Every sick man, every man rendered unserviceable by general debility, or specific ailment, must be subtracted from a nation's available resources. He not only adds nothing to the common stock, but he draws his subsistence in some form—and often, too, a very expensive subsistence—from the storehouse which the industry of others has filled. Omitting all considerations of personal and domestic suffering, of the extinction of intellectual power, and of those moral aberrations which originate in physical derangement and disease—and considering the race under the mere aspect of a money making power—in this respect it is clear that the health and strength of one community, if set in opposition to the debility and infirmity of another, would be sufficient not only to determine the balance of trade, but to settle all other points of relative superiority. Let such information be diffused through the public, as all the children in our schools might easily acquire, and a single generation would not pass away, without the transfer of immense sums to the other side of the profit and loss account in the national ledger. Of course, I do not mean that all diseases could be abolished at once, even by a universal diffusion of a knowledge of their causes; or that the era foretold by the prophet would be ushered in, when “the child shall die a hundred years old,” and when there shall be no “old man that hath not filled his days.” The violation of those beautiful and benign laws which the Creator has inwrought into our system, has been too heinous, and too long persevered in by the race, to be expiated or atoned for in a single age. Disease and debility transmitted through a long line of ancestors, have acquired a momentum by the length of the descent, which cannot at once be overcome. But I do mean, if this subject were generally understood, that such a change would be wrought in a single generation, that a broad and deep current of wealth would be made to change its direction; and instead of millions annually flowing outward from the common treasury, to defray the various expenditures of sickness, that treasury would be replenished by an equal number of millions, coined from the mint and from the ore, of labor-loving health. Yet amid all our pecuniary speculations, this grand financial operation, of substituting health and strength for sickness and debility—that is, immense gains for immense expenditures—has been unheard of.

“In the army and navy, where the expediency of giving battle has been discussed in a council of war; or afterwards when the causes of defeat have been explained by the vanquished, the state of the sick list has

been made the subject of inquiry. The historian, too, in his account of campaigns, recognizes health and sickness as among the grand causes of success or disaster. But the manly health and vigor of a people engaged in the arts of peace—as among the most essential items in a nation's valuation, as a capital ready for profitable investment, in any industrial enterprise, and therefore as a prolific source of public revenue, as well as of private wealth, have been overlooked by statesmen and law-givers, in all their schemes for national aggrandizement.

“The pecuniary merits of this subject may be presented under another aspect. Children at different ages, and under different circumstances, may be regarded as representing investments of different sums of money. These investments consist in the amount which has been expended for their nursing, rearing, clothes, board, education, and so forth, and in the value of the time of others which has been appropriated to them. Though differing exceedingly in regard to different persons, yet, in this country, the aggregate expense with its accruing interest, of the great majority at the age of twenty, or twenty-one years, can hardly be estimated at less than from five hundred to a thousand dollars, after deducting the value of all the services performed. Now if half mankind die by the time they arrive at this age, or before it, and half these come to their untimely end, through the ignorance of their parents or themselves, (and I may add through the inattention of government to their condition,) what an amazing price does our ignorance (and inattention) cost us? With what reckless prodigality do we continue to cherish it! What spendthrifts we are, not only of the purest source of affection and domestic happiness, but of wealth!”

Such being the condition of a great part of the population of this city, such the physical, and such the moral evils, which flow in a continually deepening and widening stream of misery, pollution, and death, it remains for me now to point out, in conclusion of the plan with which I commenced this paper, the means by which the sources of the current may be dried up.

To secure the community against invasion by disease from abroad, we have a well organized and efficient “Cordon Sanitaire.” This consists of the Health Officer, residing at the Quarantine station, and the Resident Physician and Health Commissioner, residing in the city. These together form a board known as Health Commissioners, and in conjunction with the Board of Health, (composed of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Assistant Aldermen,) constitute the *external* Health Police. No vessel can reach the city without an inspection by the Health Officer, who has full power to determine whether she has on board any material, or comes from a port in such a state of health, as might produce disease in the city after arriving at our wharves. Should he discover good cause to suspect her to be in a condition dangerous to the public health, he is empowered to detain her at the Quarantine, a length of time sufficient to overcome all danger therefrom. The law is imperative, unless the Board of Health, for good and sufficient reasons, choose to permit the vessel to approach the city. The Health Officer has full control over the persons of the officers, crews, and passengers of vessels

suspected of infection, and over the cargo, and all the properties of the vessel and passengers. Certain articles may be destroyed by him, and he may order bedding and clothing to be purified and washed, before being brought up to the city.

These officers are all appointed by the Governor of the State. The city authorities have no voice in their selection, though the Resident Physician is to a certain extent, subject to the direction of the Board of Health. The only medical duty prescribed for him by the law, is to "visit all sick persons reported to the Mayor, or to the Board, or Commissioners, of Health, and perform such other duties as the Board of Health shall enjoin." "The Health Commissioner, under the direction of the Board of Health, shall assist the Resident Physician in the discharge of his official duties."

These officers, it will thus be seen, belong exclusively to the external, and not to the internal Health Police of the city, except so far, or at such times, as the Board of Health may direct. With the investigation and removal of causes of disease, and the suppression of epidemics generated, and existing within the city, they have nothing to do, unless ordered specifically by the Board of Health. Under present circumstances, the Board having no municipal officer upon whose knowledge and judgment in such matters they could depend, the state officers, would undoubtedly have plenty to do, should occasion for extra services unfortunately arise.

This I repeat is our *external* Health Police; and it will be generally conceded to be well arranged, ample, and efficient. All the incumbents are medical men, and care has generally been taken to appoint those in good standing in the profession, and possessing sufficient age and experience. This is the more commendable, as nearly all the duties of some of the officers are merely financial, yet the incumbents may be, in the event of an epidemic, called upon to exercise their professional judgment and skill.

It cannot be denied that from within the confines of the city, more serious danger is to be apprehended than from without. In the pent up courts, the crowded tenements, the narrow streets and alleys, the damp dark cellars, in the destitution, filth, and misery of a large part of our population, are the germs of disease, which will readily account for a large proportion of the weekly average of nearly 200 deaths, announced in the bills of mortality.

In geographical position, in climatic placement, and in geological structure, no site perhaps could be selected for all the purposes of a great city, of a more salubrious character, than Manhattan Island. And yet whence this great mortality? It is not from without—disease is forbidden to approach our wharves. It can only be then, from within, the people meet with such abundant destruction. Many of the immediate causes of this I have endeavored to point out. The remedy and preventive, are next to be considered, and I will now invite attention to our *Internal Health Police*. This consists of an officer entitled City Inspector, an Assistant City Inspector, an Assistant to the Board of Health, and eighteen Health Wardens. For 15 or 20 years past, it has been deemed

important that the City Inspector, (who stands in the relation of a head to this corps of officials,) should possess medical attainments and qualifications, inasmuch as many of his duties prescribed by ordinance, and many others not prescribed, are of a character requiring that kind of knowledge for their performance. In the last appointment, however, to this office, this principle was repudiated for reasons not very clearly set forth; it might have been considered as an oversight, had not an opportunity been given for a revision of the act, by the presentation of a memorial on the subject, by a very large number of medical practitioners, which set forth in a clear light, the true nature of the office, and the necessity of a medical education in its incumbent, and which memorial was not only responded to favorably, but its principles denied in the report of a committee appointed to consider the subject. The propriety of the appointment was insisted upon, and the sentiment was expressed, that not only is a medical, or even a literary education in the officer, unnecessary, but that without it, in the language of the report, "he is likely to prove equally, if not more, capable and efficient." I have no wish to criticise this remarkable exposition of a principle which must strike every one who observes it, as entirely out of character with the present advanced state of intelligence. I will, however, endeavor in the proper place, to show that a medical education is essential to the proper discharge of the duties of an officer of health, of whatever grade, and of this one especially, and that the greatest care should be exercised in selecting those best qualified for this duty. The Assistant City Inspector, and Assistant of the Board of Health, need not possess medical qualifications, as their duties are more strictly clerical; yet such an education would often be useful, as they sometimes are obliged to act in the absence of the chief officer.

Nor has it ever been deemed necessary that the Health Wardens should be medically qualified. Indeed, had it been, medical men could not readily have been obtained for the duty, as conjoined therewith, is an office whose duties are of a totally different character, and entirely irrelevant to the habits and educational capabilities of a physician. I allude to the office of Dock Master, and lately, the office of Street Inspector has been added to it, in some of the wards.

Being one of the poorest offices in the gift of the Common Council, the post of Health Warden has rarely been sought for, or filled, by any other than the most ignorant and incompetent among the office-seekers. Its salary being the smallest of all, the most shameful collusions have been, and are daily, practised, for the purpose of increasing the emoluments, whereby a large amount of money is irregularly and improperly taken from the pockets of citizens.* Another serious objection to the present arrangement is, that during the prevalence of

* By the City Inspector, in 1842, a fraud was detected, which, had it proved successful, would have swindled householders of a large amount of money. It consisted of the printing of two hundred forged notices to empty sinks, which some night scavenger had ordered, and which would have yielded him from ten to thirty dollars each. This was but one operation, and there is reason to believe that such acts are frequently committed, with the connivance of the Health Wardens.

epidemic or contagious diseases, in large numbers or single cases, the timid apprehensions of non-professional men, often wholly unfit them for the duties of officers of Health. They fear to approach a sick person, or even to enter a house where the disorder is said to exist, and they are more likely to increase, than allay, popular excitement. Some other equally injudicious matters, in this connection, might be stated, but these facts alone must be sufficient to convince any one of the utter inefficiency of the present system as a Health Police. *Not one of all the officers in that important branch of the City Government, is now occupied by a medically educated man.*

Allusion has been already made to a plan of a Health Police suggested nearly two years ago. There are three prominent principles upon which an organization for this purpose should be based.

In the *first place*, the incumbents should be men whose education, habits of investigation, and powers of judgment, would enable them to determine what constitutes a nuisance, and how far any particular matter is calculated to derange the healthy state of the atmosphere,—in short, they should possess a good knowledge of the doctrine of miasmata of all kinds, and their influence upon health.

2d. They should be men whose daily occupations, and, if possible, their *personal interests*, would aid them in the discovery and suppression or removal, of the causes of disease : whose general intelligence, and regard for the welfare of the city, and especially of its poorer inhabitants, would induce and urge them to give a regular and thorough examination of all suspected and doubtful places.

3d. They should possess the qualifications for reporting, when required, to the superior authorities, the sanitary condition of the various sections of the city ;—for recommending such measures as prudence and enlightened judgment may dictate, and the practical skill requisite for the application of preventive measures, such as vaccination and the like.

All these principles and aims would be answered by the adoption of the following plan of organization. I propose *first*, to abolish the office of *Health Warden*, (of whom there are usually eighteen ;) to divide the city in twelve districts, to each of which to appoint a respectable physician, to be entitled *Health Inspector*. These twelve, with the City Inspector and his office assistants, to constitute the “Health Police of the City of New York,” the City Inspector, (also a respectable physician,) to be its head.

I need not enlarge here upon the benefits derivable from a reduction of the number of officers.

To obtain the advantages of the 2d principle, that is, to engage the *personal and private interest* of the proposed Health Inspector, (wherein we would have the best surety for the faithful performance of his duties,) I propose to make the boundaries of the Health districts identical with those of the present Dispensary districts, and to unite the offices of Health Inspector and Dispensary Physician, in the same individual.

The duties of the Dispensary Physician carry him in the very track of the nuisances which should be corrected, and while administering

the relief of his patients, he would, as Health Inspector, cast about for the source of the evil, and apply the remedy. By the performance of his duty in one capacity, his labors in the other, would be materially lessened.

How great a proportion of the Rheumatisms, the Fevers, the Inflammations, the Pulmonary and other disorders, of all kinds, are attributable to the damp cellars, the filthy tenements, the foul yards, courts, and alleys, in which the poor are crowded, can be known only to the Dispensary Physician, who spends much of his time amid these wretched scenes, where he is now powerless for any preventive action that may occur to him.

But all are aware, for bitter experience has shown, that it is in those places the Cholera, Yellow Fever, Small Pox, Scarlet Fever, Measles, Typus Fever, and all other contagious and infectious disorders, are particularly abundant and malignant.

It has been customary upon the breaking out of an epidemic, for the public authorities to use great exertions and spend much money in cleansing and purifying these pestilential spots, in order to arrest the extension of the disease. Their previous neglect, or a false economy, has repeatedly sown a wide-spread desolation, which such preventive measures, as are now suggested, would to much extent have saved.

In addition to the duties now performed by the Health Wardens, the Health Inspectors should be required,

1st. To see that all persons are vaccinated, and for this purpose, to visit all houses, especially among the destitute, once a year; to be constantly prepared, and to offer their services, to perform the operation gratuitously, and to urge it upon all who may require it.

2d. To be subject to the requisition of the Mayor, or any Alderman, or Assistant, to perform any professional duty they may justly require; the Health Inspector, in whose district may be a Watch House or Police Office, to perform all the medical and surgical duties that may be required at those places, at the call of any officer attached thereto; and to do all other things that may be required by the City Inspector.

The performance of the duties of this last section by a municipal officer, it will be at once seen, will relieve the Common Council of all the annoyance attendant upon the examination, and passage or rejection, of the numerous small bills now frequently laid before them.

It is evident that under such an arrangement as this, the duties of the Dispensary Physician would be performed with a greater degree of cheerfulness and care. The stimulus of a better remuneration, without the addition of any other duty than such as would tend to reduce the amount of his professional labors, and of a character not merely not incongruous with, but really in aid of, those labors, the duties of both offices requiring generally but a little more time than is now given to one, there could be obtained for the joint office, men of such character and age, as would not only prove a blessing to the poor, but a great assistance to the higher authorities, and give a profound satisfaction, and feeling of every possible security, to the whole community.

Not the least among the advantages derivable from the proposed

combination, is this, that this corps of professional men, (selected as they are, and doubtless ever will be, by the trustees of the Dispensaries, as those best qualified, without the slightest reference to political opinion,) being *ex officio* Health Inspectors, though commissioned as such by another power, (the Board of Health,) if found competent, the Department would be at once raised above the corrupting atmosphere of partizanship, and we should then no more hear of public duties neglected for fear of making a political enemy, or through favor to a political friend : a practice too prevalent in this Department under its present organization.

In the protection of public health, as well as in private practice, party zeal should be entirely repudiated : it is incompatible with sound judgment and efficient action.

If any one Department, either of government or of private occupation, (and the remark has as much weight in one case as in the other,) should, more than another, be above the influence of political favoritism, and be sustained upon its intrinsic merits, it is that which has the care of the lives and health of the community, or of individuals.

From what has been related respecting the effects of the habitations of the poor, upon their health, lives, and morals, the evils are attributable to three things, viz., 1st, the living in damp, dark, underground, and other ill-ventilated apartments. 2d. The dirty and injured condition of the floors, walls, yards, and other parts of the premises. 3d. The crowding too many persons in single rooms of inadequate size and accommodations. To correct the first two of these evils, there appears but one way, and that is to place all the dwellings of the city under the inspection of competent officers, who shall have power to enforce a law of domiciliary cleanliness. For this purpose, those places known or suspected to be kept usually in improper condition, should be visited periodically, say once in one, two, or three months. The law should be so arranged as to make the cleansing bear upon the owner or lessee, and not upon the tenant directly, who is generally so poor, as to be unable to perform the necessary purgation and rectification of the premises.

The provisions of such a law should be similar to these.

1st. Every dwelling, or house, or room, court, alley, or yard, or other place used as a dwelling in the City of New York, shall be subject at any time, between sunrise and sunset, to the inspection of the Health Inspector in whose district it may be situated. If in opinion of said officer, it shall be deemed unfit for the purposes of a residence, by reason of dampness, darkness, dirt, filthiness, too low ceiling, ill-ventilation, being under ground, or any other good cause, he shall immediately report the same to the City Inspector, who shall, upon being satisfied that such report is true, serve a notice to that effect upon the owner, agent, or lessee, stating the reason therefor, and directing the same to be put in proper order and condition, within a specified time ; said room, house, or premises, to be outlawed, and forbidden to be occupied as a dwelling, until said order is complied with to the satisfaction of the Health Inspector.

2d. Should any room, cellar, dwelling, or premises, be found by the Health Inspector to be in a condition dangerous to the public health, by reason of emanations from the soil, or other places, or from any other cause, said officer shall report the same to the City Inspector, who shall upon being satisfied of its correctness, notify the owner, agent, or lessee thereof, directing him to cleanse and purify said place or premises, within a reasonable time; in default of a compliance with such order, it shall be the duty of the Health Inspector to cause such place to be purified and cleansed forthwith, and all the costs to be assessed upon the property so cleansed, and in addition thereto, a fine of fifty dollars.

3d. Should any owner, lessee, or other person feel aggrieved by the action of the Health Inspector or City Inspector, appeal may be made to the Mayor, or Board of Health, (sufficient time being allowed for the purpose,) who may reverse or confirm the decision of the City Inspector.

The power possessed by the City Inspector, or his assistants, is already sufficient for the general purposes of this proposition, such as entering and inspecting any premises, yard or dwelling, &c. But the essential points require some addition to the law, and I believe they are all embraced in the above proposed provision.

Can there be a doubt that such sanitary provisions, if well and discreetly carried out, would have the happiest effect upon the condition of large numbers of the poor of this city, and that they would prevent much of the devastation of health and life now made among them, by the manner in which they are compelled to pass their days by the negligent and unfeeling landlord?

The effect of such a law upon the habits of the tenant would not be *direct*,—his personal condition can only be reached by the moral law,—but the landlord, under this compulsory process, urged by the fear of having his premises out-lawed would, in letting them, stipulate with his tenants to keep them clean, to whitewash the walls and ceilings, wash the floors, remove the collections of dirt and garbage, and keep the yards and cellars in good order. And knowing that the health officer will pay them frequent visits, armed with the power of the law, it is altogether reasonable to suppose that the tenants themselves would be stimulated to maintain a better appearance of persons and domicils—that many would feel a pride in a good and cleanly aspect—that the smothered feelings of self-respect, love of praise, and desire for the comforts of cleanliness, would, in hundreds of bosoms, be re-awakened into life and energy.

Much of the good effect which might flow from the application of such a law, would depend upon the character and manner of the individuals appointed to enforce it. The exhibition of a regard for their health and comforts, a manner combining firmness, kindness, and patience, a disposition to instruct in the *manner*, as well as to require the *act*, giving an assurance while making the visit of inspection, that it is wholly for their advantage, would satisfy the tenants that their health, comfort, and protection, against the neglect of the landlord, were the

chief objects of the law, and cause the visits of the inspector to be received with interest and pleasure. No person is more likely to be received with kindness, and welcomed as a friend, than he who comes to relieve suffering, or restore health. The plan I have suggested of uniting the offices of Dispensary Physician and Health Inspector in one individual, will effectually accomplish the object in view, in every particular.

The enforcement of a law to compel domiciliary cleanliness, may at first sight, appear to some as impracticable, to others as unconstitutional, (on the ground that a man's house is his castle, and his occupation of it cannot be interfered with without his consent,) and some may suppose it oppressive, as interfering with the rights of citizens to live as many in a room, in such manner as, and in whatever room they choose. An examination of this subject will expose the erroneousness of such views, and show that an inspection of dwellings will be as justifiable as the inspection of articles of food, or clothing, or of steamboat boilers.

We permit, without objecting, the examination of our houses by the fire wardens, to see that all is safe against fire. No one objects to the law limiting the number of passengers in a vessel crossing the ocean, and the confiscation of the vessel for its violation; and the public voice would demand, in loud tones, the razing of a house in danger of falling upon the passers by. Chimneys are required by law to be swept every month, and if they take fire, a fine is imposed though no damage results. Cispools and sinks are now required to be emptied when the contents attain to a certain depth, under heavy penalty. Unsound beef, hides, skins, fish, or any putrid, or unsound or unwholesome substance, may be forthwith cast into the river by the officer. The fire law prevents the erection of wooden buildings within certain limits, and prescribes the mode in which brick buildings shall be built. All these instances, and many others that might be mentioned, may be said to infringe on the rights of citizens, with as much propriety as the amendments here suggested. Nay, further, with regard to nuisances, the statute expressly declares the right of the Common Council to *fill up* any lots, yards, or cellars which may endanger by their condition, the public health, and the same reason why a vessel without a clean bill of health, may not lie at our wharves, will apply to the dwellings in the city. Every house should be required to have a clean bill of health, or like the ships, be placed under the control of the proper officers.

To raise from the depressed and poor, the heavy necessity of living crowded in single rooms, the source as I have endeavored to show of great moral, as well as physical, evils, much aid cannot, I fear, be found in any legal enactment. If a family are so numerous as to require separate rooms, and so poor as to be unable to procure them, no law on the subject could be enforced, which would effectually prevent the evil. The remedy lies with the humane and philanthropic capitalists, by whom houses might be erected with all the comforts and conveniences of separate chambers, &c., which would yield a fair interest on their value, and make thousands of people happy. Here is a direction in which a fortune might be applied, which would produce an amount of

happiness to the possessor, of good to the recipient, and benefit to the community, equal, I have no doubt, to all that could be possibly obtained by a new line of Atlantic steamers, though ever so successful.

This subject has two points of consideration of especial value with regard to the *temperance reformation*. An improvement in the condition of the home of the laborer, will remove one of the temptations to his frequent visits to the more comfortable and inviting grog shops, while the substitution of a more invigorating and stimulating atmosphere, will relieve in a considerable degree, the desire for artificial stimulus.

Atmospheric air is to the animal system, a powerful stimulant as well as nutrient substance. In sufficient purity and copiousness, it imparts a sustaining and vivifying power unequalled by any other substance. Its vitalizing operations present one instance of the wonderful adaptations of natural things to each other, but it is singularly striking, because of the immediate and incessant dependence of animals upon it, for life and strength. Air, when pure, gives a freshness and vigor, a tone to the nervous and muscular parts of the system, productive of the *highest degree* of mental and physical enjoyment. Without the tone thus imparted, the functions of the system become relaxed, and in addition, the animal spirits and feelings become depressed and uneasy. To relieve this condition, nature instinctively seeks some stimulating means. Many feed on mental excitement—the stimulus of business with some, with others of society, with some of hope and expectation, keep alive the energies. But the farmer feeds his nervous and general strength on fresh air and wholesome labor. Artificial stimulus is not required by him, he does not feel its want, and has comparatively little relish for it. But the dwellers in the cellars, courts, and ill-ventilated garrets, depressed and prostrated by the want of the stimulus given by nature, unable to enjoy the feelings guaranteed by an unfailing abundance of oxygen, *instinctively* feel the want of a substitute; *they find it in alcohol*. The allurements held out by those dens of destruction, abounding on all sides, add temptation to instinct, and the child of ignorance and misfortune terminates his senses, and often his life, the victim of licentiousness and unnatural debauchery.

First take the drunkard from the cellar, give him the stimulus of a pure atmosphere, relieve the demands of nature in this particular, and the work of reformation is half done, and will then go on with increased vigor; but as long as he is deprived of the sustaining power offered by nature, his artificial appetite will be less easily appeased.

The community is guilty of the double offence of cutting off from the destitute part of its members a proper supply of air, in other words, of exciting an appetite for a vile and destructive substitute, and then of presenting to them at almost every corner, opportunities for indulgence in the poison.

Very few members of the medical profession ever find a seat in the public council chamber. Legislative and executive bodies must, therefore, be dependent, in their ignorance of the subject, upon the knowledge and experience of the lay members of the profession, to enable them to make the proper laws, and exercise the proper authority for the pro-

tection of their constituents against the encroachments of disease. Is it not then, clearly the duty of the appointing powers, to fill the offices having the control and direction of sanitary matters, with men of the largest experience and most cultivated capacity in medical science, having regard to the important consideration that a man may be a good prescribing physician, without the kind of knowledge or the taste requisite for the due discharge of public duties of this character. This is a peculiar branch of the science, (though strictly medical,) and as distinct as the practice of surgery.

The judgment which should be exercised in seeking medical advisers for ourselves or our families, is equally, if not more imperative, when the protection of the 300,000 members of the community is concerned.

The necessity for a medical education in an Officer of Health, may be shown by instancing some of the practical duties which must be performed by him, whether a chief or subordinate. The question "what constitutes a nuisance?" is one which now divides the scientific world. On either side are ranged the most acute and philosophic minds. Experiment upon experiment has been tried, the light of science and research has been profusely expended, in the endeavor finally and satisfactorily to settle this question, so important to the health and happiness of man. On the one hand, the public health is to be protected at whatever cost, and on the other, private property must not unnecessarily be destroyed. Can it be supposed that a decision of this frequently intricate question by an officer who has little or no knowledge of chemistry, nor physiology, nor the laws of miasma, nor any other science bearing on it, will be satisfactory to the public, or to the holder of the property destroyed by his order? And is it reasonable to suppose that in such hands the public weal can be secure against the influence of disease—generating nuisances? Such an officer should always be able to assign the most conclusive and satisfactory reasons for his acts. The severest acumen, and most rigid search, are frequently, for a time, at fault in detecting the source of a wide-spreading pestilence—this city has repeatedly been visited by endemic diseases, and has greatly suffered in reputation and interest in consequence of a want of energetic and capable officers early to detect and remove the latent cause of the disorder; and where learning and experience have sometimes been baffled in the discovery, or right estimate, of the sources of general sickness, it is folly to suppose that ignorance and inexperience, though associated with moral worth, can infuse confidence in the community, or give to it safety or credit.

The nature of the products of decomposition must, therefore, be thoroughly understood, before a correct conclusion can be arrived at, for upon them it depends, whether the decaying matters are capable of generating disease in the human frame. And here we find the nicest distinctions necessary. For example, putrefying vegetable matter, in general, is believed to be a prolific source of disease, but there is a wide difference between different vegetables; some are almost innocuous, while others are exceedingly baneful. Some, while decaying, give forth gases of the most offensive and deleterious character, and

from others in the like state, little will be observed. The difference between "decay" and "putrefaction," the two destroying processes which animal and vegetable matters undergo, and which are wide asunder in their nature and effects, should be well understood and never forgotten.

The following communication from my friend and colleague, Dr. R. K. Hoffman, exhibits in a striking light the vigilance and discrimination necessary on the part of those who have the care of the health of large numbers of persons.

From R. K. Hoffman, M. D., late Surgeon U. S. Navy.

22 Warren Street, August 30th, 1844.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your note of the 26th inst. reminds me of our conversation at the Hospital, in which I mentioned the occurrence of fever on ship board, from the decomposition of vegetable matter.

On referring to my Journal for the particulars you ask for, I find other causes combined, which alone may be considered sufficient to have originated and propagated the fever; but I will state the circumstances from which you will make your own deductions.

In the summer of 1817, the U. S. sloop of war Ontario, commanded by Capt. James Biddle, was fitted out in this port for a voyage to the Pacific Ocean. On the 24th of June, she left the Navy Yard and anchored in the North River, off the Battery. The crew, consisting of 175, continued for a time as healthy as *usual for a new crew in port*.

Being destined to convey Mr. Rodney and Judge Prevost, as Commissioners to Buenos Ayres and Chili, a large supply of cabin stores, including the ordinary vegetables, was received on board, and stowed in rooms constructed for the purpose, on the berth deck, between the hatchways, obstructing ventilation, and encroaching on the space allotted to the men to sleep, while that under the top gallant fore-castle was redolent of its new occupants—poultry and pigs. The season was rainy, sultry, and damp; and the state of the weather compelled the crew to sleep below, where the exhalations from decaying vegetables, especially in a calm night, rendered the air almost insufferably hot, and peculiarly offensive.

Such was the condition of the ship, when at the latter part of July, during the calm, sultry, rainy weather, a sudden increase of disease took place; it commenced with a sense of great debility, particularly of the limbs, aversion to all exertion, pains in the head, loins, and bones, anxiety and nausea—the skin generally moist and hot, tongue loaded with a yellow coat, bowels rather loose. In some it assumed a Typhoid character in its progress, while its more ordinary type was that of bilious remittent. There was a daily succession of cases, and from the 20th of July to the 15th of August, the average number was thirty.

Captain Biddle did not concur in opinion, with the surgeon, that local causes had the principal agency in producing the disease, but seeing no prospect of realizing the expectation of getting to sea, obtained from

Colonel Haidman, the commanding officer, a spacious and airy building on the south side of Governor's Island, to which at the date above mentioned, the sick were removed. On the 17th there were three new cases; on the 18th, two; on the 19th, none; on the 20th, two; on that evening the wind came from the north, the air was cool, and three more sickened, preceded by a chill. These cases were transferred in succession to the hospital on the Island. With the change in the weather, which continued comfortably cool, with fresh breezes, the fever gradually disappeared, no new cases occurring after the 24th.

I would add that in the course of the voyage, when all on board were healthy, the first Lieutenant, who occupied the forward state room, sickened with symptoms of fever. On searching for the cause, some rotten potatoes were found in a locker adjoining his room, from which it was separated only by a board partition.

The state of health in the city was good during that season. None of the men died.

I am, sir, yours truly,

RICHARD K. HOFFMAN.

The subject of *sewerage* is destined to be one, which of necessity must ere long occupy the attention of the people and the government, and upon which an intelligent and judicious officer of health may throw much light. It will, I am satisfied, be found not only the most economical, but the *only* mode, in which the immense mass of filth daily generated in this large city, can be effectually removed. In some foreign cities, underground sewerage on a regular uniform plan throughout, the sewers constructed on the most scientific and substantial plans, has been carried out in the completest manner, with the most decidedly beneficial results upon the general health and comfort. We are annually giving proofs of our belief in their necessity, by the construction of single sewers in various places, as they are demanded by circumstances, but it is done without reference to any uniform plan, and it is feared that thus much confusion and great additional expense, will fall upon the treasury when ever it shall be deemed proper to project and carry out over the whole city a complete and uniform system; and I believe, "to this complexion must we come at last." One thing especially brings this conviction; since the introduction of the Croton, the rain water cisterns being useless, the bottoms of them have in many instances been taken out, and they have been converted into cispools, into which the refuse matter of the houses is thrown. Great trouble is thus saved to families and domestics, but it needs no prophetic vision to perceive, that an immense mass of offensive material, will thus be soon collected, its decomposition polluting the air, in the immediate precincts of our chambers and sitting rooms, and generating an amount of miasmatic effluvia, incalculably great and injurious. Discharge all the contents of our sinks and cispools, through sewers into the rivers, and we will avoid two of the most powerful causes of sickness and early death.

The great quantity of water from the sky, the hydrants, the unused wells, &c., now accumulating beneath the surface, must find its way into many basements and cellars, rendering them

very damp and unhealthy, and for which sewers constitute the only remedy.

Another mooted sanitary question, is the influence of *grave-yards*, *vaults*, and other burial-places, in large cities, upon the health of the inhabitants. Some acute men are now endeavoring to maintain that no specific bad results have ever been, or can be, justly attributed to them, while others, among whom is Chadwick, regard them as highly objectionable, and on this side appears the most direct and positive evidence. In this city are some places of interment, which, whatever may be said of their effects on health, are certainly crowded and offensive to a high degree; their condition and influence, as certainly, demand an intelligent and careful investigation.

While writing this communication, there applied to me for medical advice, a young man, who had gone, in good health, into a vault of a church in a densely populated part of the city, to see the coffin containing the remains of a relative; he had been in but a few moments when the effluvia was so offensive and powerful, as almost entirely to overcome him. He immediately retired, returned home, and when I saw him, three hours after, he was laboring under a considerable degree of fever, and other disordered symptoms, which he said had all come on since his visit to the vault. He thinks the vault must have contained not less than 200 bodies. The place has before been complained of, and it is difficult to avoid the belief that more or less injury must be inflicted by it on the health of the neighborhood.

Not the least important of the results which should be obtained from the appointment of an officer to superintend the affairs of public health, is that of keeping a constant watch upon the progress of diseases, drawing the proper inferences obtainable from a careful inspection of the mortality returns, and giving them to the public in a suitable form and manner. Living as we are in constant subjection to attacks of bodily disease, induced by the circumstances of life, the lances of death held constantly "in rest," by a thousand unseen hands, waiting only the stirring of the breeze to thrust them at our unconscious frames, such an officer should be as a sentinel upon the tower, watching with an intelligent and never closing eye, the manœuvres of the wily enemy, and with a ready pen, alert to send the alarm to every quarter, and prepare the city for a defence against his approaches. The inhabitants may be, some, reckless of danger, and careless of life, others may affect to despise the warnings of the watchman, and scoff at the "Philosophy of Diseases," but it is no less the duty of the faithful magistrate and officer, to see that at all points the constituency are guarded, with whatever of science *and* virtue they can find.

There is in this city but one officer in the receipt of the certificates of death—the only source of knowledge of the diseases which prevail. He is the City Inspector. It is by law made his duty to publish every Tuesday, a list of the deaths occurring during the preceding week, and in January, "to publish the whole number of deaths which shall have occurred in the city of New York during the preceding year, with the sexes, ages and diseases of the persons so dying." This is the *letter* of

the law, and any boy, who has the *quantum sufficit* of reading, writing, and arithmetic, with a fair proportion of patience, may make out the tables in the unscientifically alphabetical mode in which it has usually been done. But of what use is this? we learn by it that 9,000 or 10,000 deaths, occur annually; we are informed of the diseases which cause the *deaths*, (if the arrangement is worthy of dependence, which it is not always,) but of the *causes of the diseases* we are told nothing. To derive the proper and full advantage from the returns of mortality, we must look beyond the mere name of the diseases, and ascertain the *sources of those diseases*. Now! the reports are useful for little more than to satisfy ordinary curiosity, or to enable the preacher "to point a moral"—but if properly analyzed, and their whole bearing and influence exposed and elucidated, they would become valuable aids to the private physician, and to the public officer of health, in studying the liabilities of New York, and the influences of its climate, position, temperature, and other circumstances in producing diseases.

If I may be allowed to illustrate this point, by referring to a result of my own study of some of the Annual Reports, I will recall attention to the discovery, that in this city there is less consumption among the native residents, than in Boston or Philadelphia. This is proved by a calculation, the correctness of which may be tried at any time, which has not yet been questioned, and which turns the tables completely, as they were before set down, by those who would make New York a comparative Golgotha.

This officer should study the influences of seasons, localities, and many other circumstances, on the aspects of disease, and he should keep a record of the Barometric, Thermometric, Hygrometric, and Pluvial changes. An improvement in the certificate of death, is also much needed; a more clear designation of medical terms, inquiries into the condition and physical circumstances of the decedent, the length of his residence in this country, if a foreigner, and the influence of the change of climate upon the cause of death, and many other points, are necessary to obtain correct and specific conclusions, respecting the diseases of New York; while a thorough knowledge of the wants of science, and of what has been done abroad, in countries where the subject has constituted the labor of the lives of the most gifted individuals, is highly desirable. All this knowledge can only be obtained, and the improvements properly urged and applied, by an individual of good medical education, and one who has a taste, and willingness for the work. A capable Health Officer would be well employed, and it should be made his interest, to devote his time and talents to the dissemination of sound precepts concerning the preservation of health and life, among the people, to whom knowledge on these subjects is now almost inaccessible. To a vast number, for whom instruction as to the best method of regulating their internal and external domiciliary, and their personal arrangements, is most desirable, it could be given in such forms as would certainly arrest attention and be productive of incalculable benefits. The circumstances of life, which have influence in producing disease, are endless in number, and yet the sufferers, in too many instances, are wholly ignorant of

their power, or even of their existence. This is true to a great extent of the rich and educated, as every physician knows, but it is emphatically the case with the destitute and ignorant, to whom the laws of health and life, are a sealed book.

These labors I regard as answering to the *spirit* of the law, and, in nearly the words of an able writer on poverty and crime, "The wisest civil regulations that can be devised, will avail but little for the advancement of society, if the officers who execute them, look not beyond the letter of their commissions, and fail to communicate what they learn of the causes, the remedy, and the prevention of diseases."

To this subject the language of an inspired penman may be literally applied;—"the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

A sanitary police, composed of such individuals as are herein suggested, would constitute an efficient corps of *Health Missionaries*. Their time would be principally devoted to the purpose of teaching the poor the rules which should regulate their household operations; and the value of fresh air, ventilation, cleanliness, temperance, &c., would form constant themes for them. The circulation of Tracts on Health, distributed with the same freedom as religious tracts now are, by hands equally interested in the comforts and condition of the poor, would form a powerful addition to their means of usefulness. The Dispensary Physician wields for these purposes, a power possessed by no other class of men.

To the habits of life of many of the laboring classes, to their confinement in small apartments, and to *their ignorance of the laws of life and health*, by which especially, even their contracted arrangements are unnecessarily kept in a bad condition, we are to look for no inconsiderable amount of the injury which they sustain. The moisture, filth, and confined atmosphere of the courts and alleys, are also prolific sources of disease; in the occupations of many lurks the enemy. But if we restrict our attention to them, we shall overlook a very large proportion of the causes of mortality, and with all our efforts to improve the sanitary condition of our city, we should fail in some of the most essential points. A well regulated and efficient Health Police might do much towards correcting the existing evils, but to carry the desired reform to the utmost limit, and with a greater permanency, measures which no police can carry out, are necessary. And as these evils are not confined to the laboring and destitute part of our population, but afflict also the wealthier portion, a more healthy state of public opinion is absolutely necessary, to effect the desired results.

This can best, if not only, be done, by making Physiology, as applied to the laws of life, and the prevention of diseases, a subject of study in all our private, public, and common schools. The children who attend these, especially the latter, are the individuals by and with whom, the important change of opinion and habit, is to be wrought, if at all. It is needless to say to an ignorant adult, apparently free from sickness, that he lives, works and sleeps, in too confined an atmosphere—he will answer that he is well enough, a change would be irksome, and cost money, and he will not believe what you say, for he cannot be easily made to

understand the importance, or even the right use, of air. But bring up his child in a knowledge of the value and necessity of pure fresh air, by teaching him the relations which it bears to the blood, the digestion and other functions—teach him never to fear it, that it is his immediate and incessant source of life and health, give him a knowledge of the diseases and dangers to which its absence will subject him, and think you he would not avoid its impurities, as he would poison or the pestilence? In his school-room, his sitting-room, his chamber or his work-shop, he would seek for a pure clear atmosphere, as when thirsty he would seek the cool water, as the weary “hart panteth after the water brook.” “Ventilate, Ventilate,” would be his natural demand, in tones of earnestness proportioned to the necessity which his expansive lungs, and ever freshened feelings, would readily discover. The humble tenement of the laborer, would then, though but a single room, be no longer shut night and day, unvisited by the refreshing air of heaven; the work-shop would then no longer be a close receptacle of foul effluvia of human and other origin, and our churches, public rooms, and lecture halls, be no more unventilated. (*En passant*, what a strange inconsistency is it, in the refined and polished, to object to sip a mouthful of water from the same glass as an other, in which there could be no possible contamination, and yet swallow over and over again, the breath of others shut up in the same apartment, and which has passed through hundreds of lungs, perhaps diseased, and over teeth in every stage of decay.)

So with their food and drink, their exercise, personal cleanliness, and all other things pertaining to health and longevity; when once instructed in the principles which should be observed with regard to them, how great would be the difference in the habits of life. If it is admitted that many of the improprieties of life are due to an ignorance of its laws, then a knowledge of those laws would cause a diminution of the improprieties.

And I submit, whether a more powerful aid of *temperance* can be found, than instilling into the youthful mind a knowledge of the structure and functions of his system, and the poisonous results of alcohol upon them.

The general introduction of this subject as a branch of school learning, would, I hesitate not to say, have a greater meliorating influence upon the human condition, than any other. Already has it been introduced into many private schools, and given delight to both teachers and pupils. The abundance of material, and the facilities for its illustration, put it on a par with Chemistry and Natural Philosophy, in attractive interest, while for real usefulness to the concerns of life, it is far in advance of Astronomy, and many other studies, now generally taught, and for which it might be advantageously substituted, should any change be necessary. The operations of a living machine must necessarily possess a degree of interest to the student and observer beyond those of inanimate bodies, and when once the study of the *animal machine* is divested of its ancient and unnatural feelings of supersti-

tion, and of its exclusive and unnecessary confinement to the physician, (which I think are rapidly disappearing,) it will be found to yield a degree of entertainment, as well as usefulness, unsurpassed.

Now where are the advantages of this study most needed? among what classes of the community are its precepts and laws, its vital and saving influences, its checks and guards against disease and danger, most required? Is it among those who live in high-ceiled rooms, who have plenty of time and means to go abroad and seek fresh air in the country, who can afford to live on the choicest delicacies, and dress in the most comfortable manner, who have no fear of want, and are not compelled to study the most economical mode of living? or to seek out, from a very limited field, the best they can do for themselves? No! indeed, such need comparatively little aid. They may turn night into day, and dissipate their time and strength in debauchery and folly, but they are not compelled to reside in cellars, and chambers ill ventilated, or to associate with filth, in foul air. *They* are to be reached only by *moral* teaching. But those whom penury subjects to the necessity of living in the cheapest rooms, who must submit to the hardest extortions, or live in the street, and whose gross ignorance prevents them improving their condition as much as they might, had they a knowledge of the true mode—these constitute a large class for whom humanity demands that we should employ every means in our power for bettering their physical, as well as their moral, condition. Of what use is science, if it cannot be applied to the *practical* purposes of life, or employed to improve the character and condition of our fellow creatures. It can no longer be shut up in monkish cells, nor yet will I believe that its absence in an Officer of Health, will, by the community, be regarded as a qualification for office.

These pages have become extended to a number entirely unexpected at the commencement, yet no allusion has been made to many matters of sanitary value, which cannot be omitted in the consideration of the general subject, without leaving it in a state of incompleteness. The present condition and wished for improvement of the destitute part of our population, have been my specific objects of attention. An extract from the latest (English) work upon the subject of ventilation, recently put into my hands, places this whole subject in its true light. "The dwellings of the extremely poor present scenes of misery, desolation, and woe, which it is afflicting to witness, where the sensibilities are not hardened against the sufferings of humanity. They must be seen to be understood, and to draw out that amount of individual sympathy, which they imperiously demand, in a civilized and christian community. The station of this country in arts, literature, and science, is acknowledged throughout the globe, as well as its naval, military and commercial power; and, latterly, its exertions against the slave-trade, have given a noble example in the cause of humanity, and soften the recollections of former times. But the regeneration of its own population, or rather the placing of them in that condition which the progress of religion and philanthropy demands, is perhaps a task

“of more moral grandeur, and of still more difficult execution than
“any which it has attempted.”

To this I will only add, in conclusion, (what has been before briefly referred to,) that respecting the Laws of Health and Life, it may be said, though the remark may seem so extraordinary as apparently to amount to a libel on human nature, on no other subject connected with the interests, happiness, or longevity of man, is the darkness of ignorance so profound and so universal.

THE
SANITARY CONDITION
OF
THE LABORING POPULATION
OF
NEW YORK,

WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT

A DISCOURSE
(WITH ADDITIONS)

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